

"GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY."

The True Story of Manhattan Well.



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To thee, my venerated GRANDMOTHER, I dedicate
this, my feeble attempt at authorship. The truths which
it contains I gathered in childhood from thy own lips,
and though thou hast been resting for many a year,
and thy name and age stand registered upon imperish-
able marble, I see thee vividly as in years gone by, when
thou didst sit, the centre of an admiring throng, and
tell to us the sad history of Cousin 'Elma.

PREFACE.

IN preparing a preface for the following work, the author has but one object in view ; that object is simply to enforce the literal truth of the three words, "*Founded upon facts,*" which appear upon the title page. These words appear upon many title pages, and lend interest to many books in which there is so small a grain of truth, that it is absorbed, and loses itself in fiction ere the tale is one-half told ; but in 'Elma the reader may feel assured he is not being deceived. *She lived, and loved, and died.* Her father and mother, Friend, Ring and Cousin Catharine, Hope, 'Lidie, Levi and Ezra Weeks, and Henry Clement, are real characters and names. Hope and 'Lidie are still living—at Cornwall, on the Hudson. The characters, Willets and James, are genuine, though the names have been changed. There are many of the other characters genuine, though, for some reasons, it has been thought best to change the names.

If the reader has any misgivings upon the subject, he may satisfy himself by referring to the papers of December, 1799, and following them up to March, 1800, during which time the thrilling scenes related in the following pages were being enacted.

The author has conversed with a number of aged people—old residents of New York—who remember well the excitement occasioned by this terrible tragedy. When Theodore S. Fay was writing his "Norman Leslie," the public was given to understand that the story would be founded upon the facts contained in the story of 'Elma, and the author of the present work, as well as a multitude of other interested friends, were looking anxiously for the promised history; but, to their great disappointment, when it appeared, it bore not the slightest resemblance to the true story of 'Elma, and the fearful tragedy of Manhattan Well.

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'E L M A.

CHAPTER I.

DREAMING.

T WAS June,—lovely, flowery June,—in the year 1797. Everything seemed as beautiful and pure as though it were the first day of Creation, and all nature was just fresh from the Maker's hand. In a quiet nook, among the grand old mountains of the Hudson, stood a neat white cottage, buried among trees, and vines, and blooming flowers, and shaded by the mighty "Storm King." Near by there ran a silvery stream, which stole down from the mountain springs, and murmured pleasant music to the dwellers in that humble cottage.

On the morning upon which our story opens, there lingered beside this rivulet a fair young dreamer. Her age might have been fourteen, to

judge from the slight figure, as she half sat, half reclined, upon the velvet turf; but if we look into the thoughtful face, we may discover marks of intelligence which do not belong to that early age. The eyes were dark, — dark as midnight, — and soft, and sad, and full of that indescribable expression which makes one feel, after beholding it, as though he had listened to a prophecy. The hair was black, and the soft, glossy curls fell around the fair young face like a sable curtain. The features were regular, with no particular beauty, save that of expression; but, taken together, the classic head, the high and fully-developed forehead, the eye with its dreamy depths, the raven hair shading the round but colorless cheek, made 'Elma *almost* a beauty. Of what is she dreaming, and why does a tear steal down her cheek, and fall unheeded into the little brook which is travelling away to the great river, which lies just beyond that mountain? She is thinking of leaving that pleasant home, beyond which she knows nothing of the world. She had been always a delicate child, unable to perform her share of household duties, — for in simple country homes like hers there are duties for all, and even little children are expected to take an interest and to make themselves in some small way useful. 'Elma had always been thought

too frail a flower to put to any task. She longed for books, and for companionship with those who could tell her of the great world. She had vivid and delicious dreams of the future, and now she thought those dreams were about to be realized.

A relative, who resided in the city of New York, had proposed taking 'Elma into her family as one of her own children, thinking that an entire change of scenery and association might benefit her materially, and possibly establish her health, and save her from an early grave. The letter which brought the invitation had been received that morning, and, after having been perused by the mother, was handed to the young girl with these words:

"My daughter, thee is the subject of this letter. I wish thee to read it and decide for thyself. If it pleases thee to accept the invitation it brings, our prayers shall go with thee. 'Twill be hard to give thee up; but, if our loss is thy gain, we will be patient, and strive against the selfishness which would plead to have thee ever near us."

'Elma took the letter, and repairing to her favorite resort beside the brook, where we have already seen her, read and re-read it; and while she is busy thinking of its contents, we will say a word about her parents.

They were plain, honest, honorable people, and

had both sprung from good and proud families, but, unfortunately, the fickle goddess had never favored them with her golden smiles. The house which they occupied, and a small farm upon the mountain-side, were all they could boast of this world's goods. 'Elma was their only child, and, although petted and indulged,—as only children usually are,—unlike most similarly situated, she had never been spoiled. She was amiable and lovely in mind as in person, and her generous nature was incapable of suspicion or deceit. She had never seen the great city, the name of which headed the letter they had just received, and it was no wonder she thought with mingled feelings of pleasure and fear of leaving her quiet mountain cottage for a home within its walls.

One, two hours passed, and still she lingered with the letter closely clasped within her hand, and her thoughts far away in the regions of fancy. What fairy dreams is she weaving for the future? Oh 'Elma! will there ever come a time when thou shalt look back to this beauty-spot of nature, and hear the liquid music of that stream murmuring of pleasant memories, when thou shalt feel the shadows of earth's trials resting upon thy heart, as the shadow of that magnificent mountain now falls upon the landscape before thee?

Her mother, marvelling at her long delay, sought and found her where we have seen her dreaming. When the young girl saw her approaching she rose from the grass, where she was sitting, to meet her.

"Mother," she said, "I have been thinking—thinking of so *many* things. My head aches, and I have a dull, heavy feeling here," placing her hand upon her heart. "Cousin Catharine is very, *very* good, and I love her dearly for this beautiful letter that speaks so kindly to us all; but if thee and my dear father think it would be wiser that I should not go, I will write and tell her that I cannot leave you here alone, and she will not love me less for my loving you so well."

Her mother replied;—

"We have spoken upon the subject, thy father and I, and have concluded the invitation ought to be accepted. It rests with thyself to decide."

She really wished to go, and only hesitated until she should learn the opinion of her parents; having done which she replied,—

"I wish very much to go, dear mother. When may I tell Cousin Catharine I will come?"

"Not before September. It would not benefit thee in any way to go during the warm weather, and perhaps Cousin Catharine will be here at such

time as it will be suitable for thee to return to the city with her."

'Elma looked a little disappointed, for she had thought to go at once, and two months seemed a very long time to wait. She said nothing, however, and mother and daughter walked hand in hand back to the cottage, where they found farmer Sands seated beneath the shade of a great tree that spread its protecting branches above the vine-clad portico. His wife informed him of the result of her interview with their daughter, which information elicited no other reply than an affirmative nod of the head. He was not naturally a taciturn man, but he had contracted a habit of thinking, as it were, selfishly, and after having digested and made up his mind upon a subject, he invariably brought in a sealed verdict, and the world was never the wiser for the expression of any opinion of his. A very good man was farmer Sands; a kind husband and father, and an unobtrusive neighbor; but circumstances had chilled the sympathies of a naturally warm heart, where lay buried very many admirable social qualities. We say "*buried*," because they lay deep down among the memories of youth and early manhood, and above them are heaped the cares, and disappointments, and ruined hopes, of twenty years.

Days passed by, and weeks came quietly stepping in their footprints, and the summer was passing rapidly away. It was the middle of August. Blossoms had given place to fruit, and the nodding grain no longer waved its graceful welcome to the passer-by, but lay—a golden treasure—in the storehouse of the patient husbandman. There had been another letter received at the cottage. Cousin Catharine would be at Cornwall next week. Oh! how busy those little fingers are to-day, and how happy looks our little maiden, as she sits at her chamber window and hums a pleasant tune. Her preparations were not extensive, but the wardrobe was neat and ample, for one accustomed to the simplicity of a country life.

"Next week" came, and with it the longed-for visitor. She was stopping with nearer relatives, some two miles from the cottage, and the next day after her arrival made a call upon her friends at Hillside Farm, and 'Elma heard with evident pleasure that they were to return to the city in about three days. She felt a thrill of uneasiness as she thought of leaving her parents, and how lonely they would be without her; but she was still a child, and the novelty of the prospect of a journey soon banished all graver feelings from her heart.

'Tis the second day; to-morrow she will realize

the dream of months, yes *years*; for she had always been a dreamer, and now she was just awakening to the reality.

"Dear mother," she said, when they were seated at the neat little supper-table; "thee speaks cheerful words, but thy voice is sad; and my father, who is *always* silent, seems now both silent and *sorrowful*. When I am gone, if you miss me very much, and feel that it is better that I should return, all the rich friends in New York City shall not keep me."

Both parents assured her that they desired she should go, and that they should soon get used to being without her. Why was it that her mother found it necessary to rise from the table and go to the closet, as though she were looking for something, when she gave her daughter this assurance? Why did she take her handkerchief from her pocket so carefully, as though she wished no one to notice it, and use it, stealthily, when no one was looking. If it is a mother who reads, her ready sympathy will understand the act.

The evening was passed in making the final preparations, and in the exchange of kind and affectionate intercourse; and at an early hour, 'Elma, after exchanging with her parents a good-night kiss, retired to rest. She was weary with the unusual

excitement of the day, and scarcely had her head pressed the pillow when sleep wrapped her in a fond embrace, and she slumbered as only the young and innocent can do. She had put aside the slight drapery of the window that the sun might have free entrance, and so wake her early. She had fallen asleep with her mind filled with pleasant thoughts and anticipations so vague that they had neither form nor method of expression. As she lay there, slumbering in her innocence, the moonlight came in and bathed her in its silvery beams, and by its light there might be seen a teardrop stealing through the dark lashes, and trickling down over cheek and curl to find a resting-place within her bosom.

Why dost thou weep, fair innocent? Is not the world all before thee, with its bright hopes, and thousand witching charms? Comes there, even now, into thy dreaming heart a doubt of the stability of its joys? And is the tear-drop which has fallen into thy bosom an emblem of those which shall one day scald thy heart? God protect thee, and keep thee pure as thou art now, when thou shalt have found that beneath the most enticing pleasures lurks, often times, the deadliest sting.

CHAPTER II.

THE JOURNEY.

THE bright and glorious morning that dawned upon the day of departure was hailed as a favorable omen by our travellers. It was a sad parting at the cottage, but 'Elma was soon consoled when she found herself sailing upon the bosom of the beautiful Hudson. Everything was novel to her, and the grandeur of the scenery which lay spread out in incomparable beauty along the Highlands, for a time awed her into reverential silence. She stood with her hands folded, taking in delicious draughts of wonder and admiration. The multitude of persons whom she encountered, amused and interested her beyond measure. An old gentleman, who saw her standing, very politely arose and offered her his seat. She declined taking it, thinking she was only a little girl, and it would be very rude for her to occupy it whilst the old gentleman, with silvery hair and whiskers, would be obliged to either stand or take a great deal of trouble to find another seat.

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THE JOURNEY.

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He insisted, however, and she was obliged to accept it, despite her forcible conviction that she, of the two, was best able to stand. She had not noticed him before, further than that he was an old gentleman who carried a gold-headed cane, and had nice curling hair, almost as white as the snowy neckerchief upon which it rested. She looked at him now with some interest, for his manner to her was very respectful, and her close scrutiny soon discovered that he was minus an eye. He had a benevolent face; and although 'Elma did not understand phrenology, she thought she had never seen so beautiful a head. She almost forgot the blemish of the poor sightless orb in her admiration of the kind and benignant expression which pervaded the whole person. Perhaps the eye he had lost had transferred its expression to the one which remained, so his countenance had lost nothing in that respect. Her attention was soon attracted to other subjects of interest, but whenever she cast a glance toward the old gentleman she noticed that his eye was upon her. It did not make her uneasy or nervous, however, for it had such a kind expression, and was so full of gentle language, that she felt drawn toward him by a singular sympathy, and wished he might drop his handkerchief, or cane, that she might jump up quickly and pick it up for him, and so show that

she appreciated his kindness in giving her his large and comfortable chair, while he himself occupied one with a straight, uneasy back, and no arms. Most girls of her age would have accepted the act as one of ordinary *politeness*, but 'Elma called it *kindness*, for she had not yet learned the distinction between those two words, and did not know how much cold *politeness* existed in the world, in which there was no mingling of that more Christian sentiment.

Her cousin conversed pleasantly and familiarly with her, and pointed out to her many places of interest, relating the history or anecdote, as the case might be, which had given notoriety to the location. Thus hour after hour passed, almost imperceptibly away. Please remember, dear reader, that in the days of which we write the journey from Cornwall to New York—a distance of sixty miles—was not performed, as now, in the short space of two or three hours. The person who was fortunate enough to accomplish it in a day, must have both wind and tide in his favor. Our travellers were indebted to both these elements, and when they had watched the sun sink slowly down behind the western horizon, and lost sight of the distant hills in the gathering shades of evening, the first faint glimmer of the city lights came dancing over the blue waters, as if to give a

cheerful welcome to the homeward bound. 'Elma watched them sparkling and gleaming through the twilight, as they became gradually larger, more numerous and brilliant, until her head grew dizzy, and she laid it childishly in her cousin's lap, to rest. Then, for the first time, did her thoughts go back regretfully to her quiet home, now far away. Tears came up from her overburdened heart, and she wept with feelings new and strange to her. While her eyes were thus hid, she could see her old home, with her parents sitting there alone, sad, no doubt, upon the first evening of her absence. She gazed, in fancy, into her own neat and comfortable little room, where the moonlight had looked in upon her last night. Oh, how sad it all seemed now, and how she wished—very quietly, lest Cousin Catharine should hear her—that she had never left it, and those dear parents who look so sorrowful without her.

"'Elma, 'Elma, has thee fallen asleep, child?"

She did not rise quickly, for she dreaded to lose the dear picture before her, and she was glad her cousin thought she had been sleeping, for now she would not think it strange that her eyes looked red and heavy.

They were met at the landing by Friend Ring, the husband of Cousin Catharine, whom 'Elma remem-

bered to have seen some years before. He shook her kindly by the hand and told her he was very glad to see her, and led her carefully through the crowd to the carriage that was waiting for them. Everything looked wild and confusing to the little stranger, and she looked from the carriage window in a perfect maze of curiosity and admiration. She wondered if she should ever dare go out alone, and if the school she should attend would be far from home. Oh, how strange it seemed to think about a *home* in this great noisy city! She wondered if the school-girls would be kind to her, or if they would be cold and haughty, and make her feel lonely and homesick. While she was settling these questions in her mind, the carriage stopped, and Friend Ring said, "Here we are."

Gentle reader, it was not in Fifth Avenue, nor Madison Square, nor Grammercy Park. Those localities were then far, *very* far beyond the city's bounds, and the palaces which now stand there, in proud abundance, were not even dreamed of in the dim, far-off future. The house in which dwelt Cousin Catharine, and in which our little friend was to find a home, was situated in Greenwich Street, near what is now called Chambers Street, and was at that time considered a very desirable location for genteel private families. To 'Elma the

house looked very large, though it was in reality an ordinary three-story brick building. The bell was answered by a tidy, pleasant-faced domestic, shining and black as ebony. On her head was the fanciful red-and-yellow turban so much prized by the better classes of her color. Her teeth, white and shining as pearls, were the first objects that attracted the notice of the little stranger as she stood before her.

The evident pleasure manifested at the return of the mistress, and the many welcomes and courtesies bestowed upon her, told very plainly that love—not fear—controlled that household. They found supper waiting for them; and everything looked so bright, and comfortable, and home-like, that 'Elma accused herself of ingratitude when she looked around upon it all, and heard the kind and pleasant voice of her cousin urging her to partake of the food before her. She tried to feel contented and to put away the sorrowful feeling that made her heart so large she sometimes feared it would choke her. After supper she asked her cousin's permission to retire,—she was very weary, and had a headache,—and after giving her a good-night kiss, she was shown to her room by Judy, the ebony-faced, who lingered at the door to say to her,—

"Ebery ting nice and right in de little room;

Judy see to dat her own self. Young missie want anyting 'fore I go?"

Being assured there was nothing wanting, she dropped a courtesy of unusual grace as she retired, saying to herself as she went down stairs, —

"Well, de law suz, if dat don't beat all! If she ain't de beautifulest little gal I ever seed, den I wouldn't say so. Jist as ginteel and perlite as any city borned lady, and lookin' as sweet and purty as any ob dem are posies what blows in de woods whar she's cum frum. 'Taint no wonder dough, for noffin dat wa'n't good and nice couldent be no 'lation to Fend Ring, for if eber dar was a borned angel, she's one; and she lookin' jist as plain and numble, wid dat little white hankercher tucked in de bosom ob dat gray gound ob hern, 's if she wa'n't no better dan nobody else. When she says 'Judy, will dee do dis for me, or dat for me, if dee preases?' I'd like to go right down on my marrers and kiss her little feet. To hear de likes ob her sayin', 'If de preases,' to me; and den when its done, she says, 'I'm 'bliged to dee, Judy.' 'Taint noffin but words, any way, but, somehow, it makes a poor darkie 'spect herself, and de chores ain't half so hard to do when a body sez 'If dee preases, Judy.' 'Taint no use talkin', dem Quakers am a heap better dan some folks I know, what makes a great kadoo ober derselves and can't

'ford to speak decent to a poor nigge, cause dey bin got a little money."

By the time she had finished this soliloquy she had reached the kitchen, where, upon two chairs, lay a boy about seven years of age, sleeping, and who so closely resembled herself that no one could, for a moment, doubt the relationship existing between them.

"Now, if dat chile ain't bin gone to sleep on dem chars agin! Seems like I sha'n't never be able to larn him noffin. Joe! Joe! git off dem chars, you nigga, and go to bed. Dident I tell you fifty times neber do dat ting agin? Next ting you know you won't know noffin. It take away all de wit to sleep wid de head hangin down like dat; moreover you'll cotch cold, an' be squeezin' wid de tisik all night so nobody can't git a wink ob sleep."

Thus importuned, the child rose, whining, from his uneasy bed, and sought a more comfortable one in the adjoining room, which was the particular pride of Judy's heart as her own "private 'partment."

When 'Elma was left alone in her new chamber she stood for a moment looking around her without noticing the objects upon which her eyes rested. Her mind was far away. There was a kiss upon her lips — but it was not her mother's kiss; she had

given one in exchange — but it was not upon her mother's lips it rested. This was the first time in her life she had ever lain down to sleep without exchanging that token of affection with her parents, and she felt almost guilty that to-night it had been given to another. Sinking upon a chair, she buried her face in her hands and wept away the sadness of her heart in undisturbed, refreshing tears.

How different everything seemed when she looked up after the shower had passed. How cozy and comfortable it was, with its neat carpet and snowy bed; and there in the corner was a nice rocking-chair, covered with blue damask, neither large nor small, but looking as though it had been made for that very corner of that very room. The furniture was all very neat, corresponding nicely with the size of the apartment, and on the little centre-table stood a vase of flowers which had been placed there in the morning by Judy, with the remark, "Poor chile! Judy'll gib her a little posy-pot, jist to 'mind her ob de green fiels, and make her feel to hum like, when she bin git shet up mungst de bricks and marter."

This room had been selected for 'Elma's use, because it was next her cousin's and she would not feel timid or lonesome there. As that kind lady was retiring to her own chamber, she looked in for

a moment upon her little friend, whom she found quietly sleeping, and gently kissing the fair young cheek, over which the black and glossy curls fell caressingly, she murmured an inaudible "God bless thee, my child!" and noiselessly closing the door, sought her own pillow.

CHAPTER III.

"'LIDIE."

ELMA was an early riser, and, having slept soundly and refreshingly after her journey, she opened her eyes just in time to see the first faint sunbeam which found its way among the shadows of the surrounding buildings and peeped into her chamber window. She lay for a while, thinking of one thing and another, until she heard her cousin stirring, and then she rose, intending to be ready and join her as she should pass her door.

She had scarcely commenced dressing when a tiny little hand knocked at her door, and upon opening it she saw standing there a little fairy, who entered before she had time to extend an invitation, and offering her hand said,—

"Ith thee Touthin 'Elma?"

Upon being answered in the affirmative, she replied,—

"Well I tought tho. I'm 'ittle 'Lidie, and I tum

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"'LIDIE."

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to help thee dreth thythelf. Div 'Lidie a kith, touthin!"

She put up her little rosebud mouth, and throwing her arms around 'Elma's neck she kissed her over and over again. 'Elma humored her fancy in thinking she could assist her, and when she was ready she seated herself upon a low stool and called 'Lidie to hook up her dress. She worked very patiently for a while, but first she got it crooked at the bottom, and then at the top, and then she got out of patience and said,—

"I tant do thith, touthin, but I tan make nithe turls."

'Elma replied that she had got her hair curled this morning, but 'Lidie should curl it next time if she liked. The child was satisfied with the compromise, and, smoothing down her little white apron with an air of peculiar satisfaction, she took her cousin's hand and the two descended to the breakfast-room together.

Eliza, or 'Lidie as she was pettingly called, was Cousin Catharine's only child, a little fairy of three summers, with skin pure as the lily, and cheek blooming as the rose, and eyes like nothing but the deep blue sky, with a star shining in each; and a prettily turned head covered with a profusion of light golden curls. Her winning manners and

warm little heart gained her many friends, and 'Lidie was the pet of the household. She took strange likes and dislikes to people, and if, upon a first meeting, she made up her mind unfavorably, no amount of cakes or candies could in anywise avail to change or soften her decision. She seemed to have made up her mind at once to be pleased with 'Elma, for she never let go her hand or stirred from her side until breakfast was announced; and she kept talking in her pretty, childish way so incessantly that any reply was quite unnecessary, for she seemed quite happy in having found so patient a listener.

At breakfast she ate nothing, but sat opposite to 'Elma with her elbow on the table, her soft rosy cheek resting on her tiny hand, and her bright eyes riveted on her cousin's face.

"Thee is not taking any breakfast, darling," said her mother; "and cousin will think thee a very rude little girl, I fear, if thee watches her so closely."

The little hand was removed, and turning her eyes toward her mother, with a deep sigh of satisfaction she said, in the simplicity and sincerity of her childish heart, —

"Oh, mother, se is so pitty! thuch nithe turls! Oh, mother, how 'Lidie loveths her! May se seep wis me in my 'ittle trib?"

'Lidie's remarks called forth a smile from her father and mother, and 'Elma blushed in spite of her effort not to do so; and 'Lidie, noticing the rich color, as the warm blood mounted to her cheeks, exclaimed, in a perfect extasy of delight, —

"Oh, what pitty red teecks se's got now! redder 'an 'Lidie's I do beve."

"'Lidie must eat her breakfast, and not talk so much," said her mother.

The child seemed relieved by the remarks she had made, and now applied herself diligently to the well-filled plate before her, only casting an occasional admiring glance across the table.

It was Thursday morning, or Fifth-day, as Friends call it, and Cousin Catharine and her husband invariably attended meeting on that day. Punctual to their usual practice, ten o'clock found them on their way to Pearl Street, where their meeting was held. 'Elma accompanied them, having torn herself away from 'Lidie with the promise to return very soon and help her read her new picture-book.

If the congregation was plain, the building in which they met to worship was plainer still. Carpetless aisles, and cushionless seats, and oftentimes silent meetings, offered but little inducement for unbelievers to assemble there. Nothing but the love of God, pure and undefiled, could induce a congre-

gation to assemble and sit in humble silence, quietly waiting for His Holy Spirit to stir the deep waters, and pour forth from the troubled fountain His own spontaneous truths. Sometimes the Holy Spirit rested upon some chosen oracle, and then those good and pure-hearted men and women would speak with tongues of eloquence; and one forgot the discomforts of the earthly tabernacle, as they dwelt in love and sympathy upon the agonies of Gethsemane and Calvary, and could not but feel that the principle which had banished all ornament from their dress and sanctuary, was worthy of all commendation, as approaching most nearly the simplicity and humility of our Saviour. Upon the present occasion the Spirit did not move any one to speak, and an hour was spent in silence. 'Elma did not find it tedious, for she was in the habit of attending Friends' Meeting with her parents, when they often sat in silence, thinking of the goodness of God, and returning thanks in the earnest breathings of the heart, inaudible to man, but heard by Him who is "*so far, and yet so near.*"

'Elma found much to interest her in the homeward walk, and saw many things new and wonderful to her. When they reached their own door she would have passed by — not knowing the place — had she not accidentally looked up and seen 'Lidie's


little face pressed close against the window-pane, and her little hands emphatically beckoning them to make haste.

"What made thee tay tho long?" was her first exclamation when they entered. "Thee tant do to meeting no more, not *no more*. Touthin 'Elma, Lidie tant pare thee."

She could not trust her to go to her room to lay aside her bonnet and shawl for fear she would stay too long, so she trotted along by her side, holding her tightly by the hand, and talking busily all the way. They were very happy together, 'Elma and 'Lidie; and if the child was peevish or fretful, nothing could so effectually restore her usual amiable tone of feeling as for 'Elma to take her in her lap and tell her stories of her mountain home. When she came to tell her of the little curly-tailed pigs, and the speckled chickens scarcely larger than the canary that sang in the green cage at the dining-room window, and the little red calf with a snowy star in its forehead, and great pitiful black eyes, and the white colt, — a real, living little horse no larger than 'Lidie's rocking horse, — the child's delight knew no bounds, and she clapped her hands and laughed in a perfect ecstasy of delight.

CHAPTER IV.

SCHOOL.

UIETLY and unexcitedly weeks passed by. 'Elma had been placed at school, and all her dreams of happiness were realized, in being surrounded by intelligent companions of her own age with whom she could compete for the honors of the school-room. At first she was far behind the classes of her age, but a discerning teacher soon discovered that in natural intelligence and quality of mind she was far superior to those who, by years of hard study, had acquired a knowledge of books which placed them in a position above her, but whom she was destined soon to distance and leave far behind in the race of learning which they were running.

If some of the young ladies felt disposed to put on airs and speak of 'Elma as "The little Mountain Maid," the quiet dignity with which she passed by unnoticed both airs and remarks offered so little inducement for a repetition of the rudeness that she

SCHOOL.

soon ceased to have any annoyance in that respect, and the marked kindness and admiration of her teachers soon rendered her an object of envy to her schoolmates.

There was one young lady who plumed herself upon being the tallest girl in school, and occupying a position in the first class, and who seemed to be particularly annoyed at 'Elma's popularity with her teachers. Miss Fannie Bruce was seventeen, and had been told by some doating friends, that in two years — when she would have completed her studies — she would enter society under peculiarly favorable circumstances, viz., rich, fashionable, and a beauty. To this last qualification Fannie attached undue importance, and the first question that invariably sprang up in her mind when she encountered a new face was, "Is she more beautiful than I?" She had asked herself this question on the morning when 'Elma first entered the school-room, but the usual ready response did not at once present itself. There was so much in the face to study that she could not hastily compute the charm of its expression, and sat for some moments gazing intently upon the form and features of the young stranger. At the expiration of ten minutes Fannie returned to her books, firmly convinced that 'Elma was by no means so *elegant* a young lady as herself, though

she was far from being so well satisfied as regarded the question of her hair and eyes.

Next to Fannie, and one step above her in the first class, was Maude Everet. Never were next neighbors more unlike than Fannie and Maude. The one cold, haughty, and overbearing; the other mild, affectionate, and forgiving. Fannie was gay, sparkling, and fascinating; with large hazel eyes, and heavy braids of auburn hair, and a rich, warm color on her cheek that varied with every thought. Alas, that such unholy fires as burned within her bosom should have so lovely a receptacle!

Maude was retiring, but not bashful; winning hearts imperceptibly by her intrinsic worth. Low voiced and loving, she was the angel of the domestic fireside, and gathered around her a circle of friends, rich in intellect, and, like herself, pure in heart and sentiment. One could not look into her dark-blue eyes and doubt that the soul which lay slumbering in their depths would one day move her to deeds of love and noble self-sacrifice. Curls of the richest golden hue clustered thickly around her neck and brow, and her cheek—rosy as the early summer morning—betokened health and peace of mind.

Fannie was very ambitious of being intimate with Maude, for she was her equal in all respects, her

superior in many. She had heard Maude speak of her brother, who was two years older than herself. He was in college, and would graduate this fall. He was coming home at Christmas, and then Maude was to have a Christmas party. Oh, irresistible! A brother fresh from college—handsome he *must* be, if he were any relation to Maude—and intelligent, as a matter of course! She must manage to be at *that* party, and considering they were in the same class, and sat together, she did not see how Maude could well avoid asking her. Her cousin—Lucy Douglas—was going to have a Christmas party, but she was only twelve, and there would be nothing but children there, and what did *she* care about playing “Puss in the corner,” and “Copenhagen,” and such nonsensical games! She would not go, any way; but how should she manage to get an invitation to the other? If Maude were like other girls she could manage it well enough, but there was an open straightforwardness about her manner that always took Fannie by surprise when she attempted any manœuvring. “I’ll try it any way,” thought she; “a Christmas party, and a brother of nineteen, fresh from college, are worth taking some trouble for.”

That day Fannie made herself particularly agreeable to Maude, and told her Lucy Douglas was go-

ing to have a Christmas party, but there would be only children there, so she should not go, as she did not care about playing "Ring around rosey," and being kissed by all the little bread-and-butter mouths. Maude laughed at the idea of the haughty Fannie Bruce playing at games with children, and declared there was nothing she so much liked as a good game of "Puss in the corner," with a whole flock of merry little kittens scrambling for their places.

"By the way Maude," said Fannie, "I believe you do like children, for I saw you this morning talking and laughing with that little specimen from the mountains. What an odd piece she is, to be sure! Sometimes she seems quite like a young lady, but when I hear her reciting with those girls in the third class, I cannot look upon her as anything but a child. I suppose she is an overgrown girl, and what she lacks in mind she makes up in size. I wonder how old she is?"

"If you are speaking of 'Elma," Maude replied, "she is sixteen—one year younger than you and I; and if we had spent our lives in rambling over the fields, and through the woods, studying nature instead of books, I doubt very much if we should be able to take our places now even in the *third* class, as she has done. 'Elma is not going to *remain*

in the third class, and, as you and I have still two years to spend here, we must be careful that she does not get a chance to remind us of the time when we looked down upon her from this seat of pride, when she, herself, shall occupy its first position."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Fannie, "little 'Elma in the first class! Well, Maude, it is just like you; if there is any one in school unable to take their own part, you are always ready to do it for them."

"I am by no means prepared to say that 'Elma is unable to take her own part," Maude replied. "If we may judge from the color and sparkle of her eye, she is an antagonist I should not at all like to encounter. If there is not a wealth of wit and genius deep down in her nature which has never yet been stirred, then Maude Everet is a very bad physiognomist. I have taken a fancy to 'Elma; and when she sits and tells me of her simple home, and the cottage hid among trees and vines, and the great mountains that rise magnificently, pile upon pile, until they seem to touch the sky, which *she* says is brighter and bluer there than anywhere else, I can fancy a home for fairies, and 'Elma herself the presiding genius of it all. She has described to me her own little room, and how she used to sit there and dream of the time when she should have books, and a teacher; and the passion for them became so

great that it was like a scorching thirst upon her, and her health declined, and her parents feared that they might lose her, and this very affliction was made the means of bringing her here where her love of study could be indulged; and now she is so happy. Her whole soul seems filled with one idea—Knowledge! knowledge! Indeed, if I had a sister, I would wish her to be just like 'Elma. By the way, that reminds me, her face has always made me think of one I have seen before. I have many times tried to remember who it is she is so like, but have never, until this moment, been able to do so."

"Well, well, Maude, perhaps you had a sister—stolen away by the gypsies when a little child, and she has turned up mysteriously in the form of a country girl called 'Elma Sands. Oh, delicious! what a romance."

"No, Fannie, she was not stolen by the gypsies—that sister whom 'Elma so much resembles—but carried off to heaven by the angels, never to return to us again. She was older than myself, and died before I can remember, and it is the miniature that my mother always carries in her bosom of which 'Elma has so often reminded me. The same soft eyes, and dark, curling hair, the very same; though Marie was but six years old, the likeness is perfect."

"What strange fancies you do take, Maude," said Fannie; "there is not a girl in the school I like less than 'Elma."

"Well, 'every man to his own mind,' and I suppose school-girls have the same privilege," said Maude.

The school of which we write was a superior boarding and day school for young ladies. Maude and Fannie were boarders, and went home every Friday evening, as their parents lived quite out of town, their residences being the one about where the Fifth Avenue Hotel now stands, the other on Murray Hill—about what is called in the present day, Thirty-second street and Fifth avenue. Very aristocratic were they, and every Friday afternoon their carriages stood at the door of Miss Willson's establishment at the same moment, waiting for the young ladies. 'Elma was a day scholar, the school being but a few blocks from her home, and as the carriages rolled off she invariably had a kiss wafted her from Maude's little hand as she set out on her homeward walk. "Dear Maude," she would murmur to herself; "how kind she is! How would I ever get through with those dreadful French verbs without her. I wonder if I shall ever be able to speak them as she does!"

Be patient, little laborer, and time will bring

thee thy reward. Be not distrustful of thyself, or blush, when, after the exercises, Professor Vilplaît lays his hand so gently on thy head, and declares that thou wert born with a French twist in thy tongue.

CHAPTER V.

HOPE.

THEY were happy days for 'Elma. She heard from and wrote often to her parents. Long and cheerful letters came and went, and she ceased to pine for home. The change had had the desired effect upon her health, and on her cheek, where the lily had reigned supreme, the rose was now striving for pre-eminence. If there was anything wanting to make her perfectly happy, it was a companion at home near her own age. One afternoon when she had returned from school, and was seated in her own room surrounded with books, and prepared for a battle with the difficulties of her lessons, 'Lidie came rushing in, holding in her hand an open letter and exclaiming all out of breath, —

“Here, touthin 'Elma, wead thith; mother sent it, and thaid thee would be glad. Aunt Hope ith tummin; oh, thutch a nice little Aunt Hope, thutch a pittie little Aunt Hope! Judy thayth Joe hath

"got Aunt Charity, but Hope ith pittiyer than Charity, *I* know."

While the child was talking 'Elma glanced over the letter and saw that it announced the fact that her cousin Hope Sands—a girl of about thirteen years of age—was coming to spend the winter with her sister, Cousin Catharine, for the purpose of attending school. 'Elma had never seen her, but a thrill of delight passed through her heart as she thought how pleasant it would be for her to have a companion in that little room. Some one to read with, some one to study with, some one to walk with; and last, though not least, some one to say "*thee*" in school beside herself. She was the only one there who spoke the plain language, and sometimes the girls looked at each other, and smiled, when she said "*tu*" instead of "*vous*," to Professor Vilplaît.

Dropping her books, she took 'Lidie by the hand—herself scarcely less delighted than the child—and joined her cousin in the sitting-room below. Many were the questions she asked in reference to this unknown relative, and kind and patient were the answers she received. Hope would be there next week, on Wednesday. This was Thursday. Five days seemed a long time to wait, but 'Elma returned to her books and tried to be patient.

They were very long days at school; dearly as she loved study the time passed away slowly, and when she parted with Maude on Friday afternoon she said,—

"*Next* Friday I shall not be alone. Oh, how I have longed for a sister, like thee, dear Maude, to love and sympathize with me, and help me—as thou hast done. How can I ever repay thy kindness? I, who know so little, can never hope to be of use to thee. All I can do is to love thee."

"And to love me is all I require, little Daisy. The love of a true friend is worth more than all the French verbs that Professor Vilplaît has packed away in that profound cranium of his; and in saying, 'Maude, I love thee,' thou hast used the wealth of his language and our own; and I had rather hear those three simple words from 'Elma's lips than that she should say to me, 'Maude, I will teach thee wisdom, that thou shalt excel the wisest of the wise;' for with wisdom *only* the world would be indeed a wilderness, and life without a charm, if there were none to wisper, '*Maude, I love thee.*' So good-by, Daisy! There is only one flower I would rather be, and that is called Heartsease."

The holidays were fast approaching. Harry Everet had written home saying he had invited a college chum to spend them with him at his home

in New York. Cevillian Lee was his classmate and most intimate friend, and had accepted his invitation to spend a month with him in the city. Oh, how Fannie Bruce's heart beat beneath her little bodice when she heard that! She had no brother older than herself, and there was no chance of having a college friend to spend a month with them. She doubled her efforts to be agreeable to Maude, and forbore making any sarcastic remarks with reference to her little friend, seeing she was always ready to defend her. "I know what I will do," thought Fannie; "I will get mamma to let me invite a few friends to take tea and spend the evening with me next Friday week, just to have some music and a dance; and I will invite Maude. Cousin Phil Stetson shall be there, and Maude raves so about music she will not be able to withstand that voice of his, I know, and I will make it the means of an invitation for us both."

Faithful to her intention Fannie asked and received permission to give the invitations she desired. Maude was the first one invited, and to Fannie's great delight she was told on the following day that Maude's mother had given her permission to accept the invitation. All things were going on as Fannie wished now, and she was quite contented.

As was expected, on Wednesday 'Elma was made

happy by the arrival of Cousin Hope. Never were sisters more unlike than she and Cousin Catharine. The latter was fair, with large, soft, blue eyes, and a face of the most perfect oval. An abundance of light auburn hair was plainly arranged over the high and intellectual forehead, and neatly disposed beneath a simple lace cap, which was drawn with a narrow bobbin, and set off to the greatest advantage the benevolent countenance which, Judy said, "shined wid goodness like an angel ob light."

Hope was dark, with small, piercing, black eyes that sparkled with intelligence and fun. Her countenance was not remarkable for any particular beauty, but there was something which attracted, one could scarce tell why. The hair—which was very dark—was cut short, and brushed up from the temples, displaying to good advantage a well developed head for a girl of thirteen. If there was in her countenance any one expression predominant it was that of mischief. Fun was her ruling passion, and when she laughed it rippled up from the merry heart as musical as the song of birds, and so contagious was it that whoever heard it was compelled to laugh from very sympathy with the light-hearted girl.

"Lor, bress us!" said Judy, "when Miss Hope larf Judy 'gin to grin like as if suthin was ticklin

ob her in de ribs; and Joe, he cackle and snicker jis as if de fun all 'longed to his self. Nobody couldn't keep riled wid her, for when *she* larf dey got to larf, no matter how mad dey is inside."

'Elma was delighted with the wit and humor of her cousin, and longed for Monday, that she might take her to school and make her known to Maude. Friend Ring was from home when Hope arrived; indeed he was very generally from home, his business requiring long and frequent absences from the city. This winter he was to spend in Pensacola, Florida, and, thinking his family would be very lonely during his absence, he had yielded to the wishes of an intimate friend who had long been desirous of making his home beneath their roof. Levi Weeks was coming to *board* with them, and so be a protector to the family when they should be left alone. On Sunday morning he took his seat with them at breakfast, a member of the household. Friend Ring was there,—having returned the day previous,—and on Tuesday he would set out on his journey, to be absent for several months.

Monday morning came, and the two light-hearted girls—Elma and Hope—set out at an early hour for school, and reached their destination just as Maude was tripping up the steps. 'Elma presented her cousin, and the three entered the school-room to-

gether. The days passed very pleasantly now, and Friday evenings came around so rapidly that it was a matter of surprise to 'Elma where the time had gone.

Friend Ring had started on his journey and 'Lidie had dried her tears, which fell in torrents when she saw the heavy trunks placed upon the carriage, and was told that her father was going away for a long, long time.

Fannie Bruce's plans had worked admirably. Maude had visited her on the evening appointed. Cousin Phil had sung, and she had listened, delighted at the strain. He had an unusually fine voice, and with Maude music was a passion. She both played and sang with taste and execution beyond the ordinary ability of young ladies of her age. She and Philip Stetson sang and danced together many times during the evening, and when at length the carriage was announced, and Maude, hooded and cloaked, descended to depart, he was waiting to place her in it and bid her once more good-night.

What was it in his voice that made his words come back to her when she had laid her head upon the pillow? and why did he and Fannie Bruce mingle so distractingly with all her dreams?

CHAPTER VI.

A SURPRISE.

IT was the twenty-fourth of December. The examination at Miss Willson's establishment had gone off very creditably to the young ladies. 'Elma acquitted herself with great honor, and a listener might have heard more than one inquiry as to who was that modest-looking girl, with such magnificent eyes and hair, who never faltered in her part, and who spoke with a purity of accent and pronunciation wanting in many who had spent years at Miss Willson's first-class establishment.

On Fannie Bruce's toilet-table lay a neat envelope, inclosing an invitation to Maude's Christmas party, and in 'Elma's portfolio was a corresponding one, accompanied by a kind note from her friend to to this effect:

"DEAR DAISY,—The carriage will call for you at seven. I want a little time to talk with you before the company arrive, and I name an early hour

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in order that you may be here to help me receive them. Tell your cousin that mamma sends an invitation for you to remain with me until to-morrow. I hope it will meet with her approbation for you to do so; if *not*, the carriage is at your service at any hour she chooses to name for your return; only please ask her not to make it too early. For the present, adieu.

"In truest affection,

"MAUDE.

"December, 20th."

'Elma had obtained consent to go, and was to remain with her friend until the following day. Maude's parents were well and favorably known, by reputation, to Friend Ring, who approved highly of the friendship that had sprung up between their daughter and 'Elma.

Cousin Catharine had directed the arrangement of the dress which was to be worn upon this occasion, and truly it was as simply pure and elegant as the most fastidious taste could have required. A succession of white lace illusion skirts, falling in fleecy folds over an under-dress of Swiss muslin, gave one an idea of airy, floating clouds. The corsage was low, and fitted nicely the graceful figure of the wearer. Sleeves very full and short, without ribbon or ornament, and a broad illusion sash, completed

the dress. As usual, 'Elma wore her beautiful black hair in ringlets, without a flower or ornament of any kind. The excitement of preparing for this, her first party, had brought a bright color to her cheek, and if 'Elma was not beautiful as she sat tapping her little white slipper on the hearth-rug, while she listened for the carriage, then Cousin Catharine was mistaken, for she thought she had never seen anything that came so near her definition of the word.

"Here am de carriage, Miss Almy," said Judy, popping her woolly head in at the door, dropping a courtesy, and folding her hands upon her bosom, as if perfectly dumbfounded at the sight which met her view. She stood for a moment gazing upon 'Elma, and then retired precipitately, indulging, as usual, in a lengthy soliloquy.

"Oh, de goody heabens an' airth, ain't dat a sweet blossom! None ob yer furbelows ner gim-cacks dar; none ob yer shiny chicken-fixens to set her off; nuffin but de nateral beauty ob form an' feater. De Lor' help dem young men what meet wid her to-night! Dey neber cease to member her, I bet dey don't. And to tink she spring up and growed way up dar 'mongst de mountains, dat de killinest ting ob all. It make Judy's heart all turn moulincholy when she see dat young ting, for de good Lor' always take de best and beautifulest to

hisself, and dat being de case Miss Almy can't stay long wid us. Dar she goes, little dear! Lor' how I wish dat carriage and hosses and nigga driber, all 'longed to herself, and Joe had a shiny hat and a gold streak 'round it, to stand on de footboard ahind an' jump down and open de door for her ebery time."

"Joe, what under de canopy ail your head! How cum all dem papers in yer wool? Well, now, dat little mischief Miss Hope, been down hyar!" and Judy, rather roughly, snatched out the papers which it had cost Hope some trouble and Joe a good deal of pain to place there.

"Yah, yah! your head look like a door-mat, Joe; ebery wool stand up for itself. Miss Hope 'll be de deat ob me yet, wid her nonsense."

'Elma reached the Everet mansion long before any of the other guests arrived. Maude was in her own room dressing when she came, and had given orders for her to be shown immediately thither. Kind and heartfelt was the welcome given, and sincere and undisguised the admiration Maude felt when 'Elma threw aside cloak and hood and stood before her in her unadorned loveliness. Maude wore a dress of sky-blue silk, with the neck and sleeves trimmed with rich lace. On her bosom was fastened a small bouquet of the choicest natural

flowers, and a single rose, of the purest white, rested among her curls. Around the fair white throat was fastened a necklace of diamonds, and bracelets to match encircled her arms. She was just clasping the last one, and the two young girls stood face to face in mute admiration of each other. 'Elma was so happy, and her heart was so full of admiration for the beautiful creature before her, that she was unable to utter a word.

"Well, Daisy, how do you like me?" said Maude, passing her arm around her friend's waist, and kissing her affectionately on the cheek.

"Like thee, dear Maude? I thought I loved thee well enough before, but to-night thou art so lovely I cannot tell thee all I feel."

"Are not these jewels—my father's Christmas gift—very beautiful, 'Elma?"

"They are indeed, and become thee well!"

"Did Santa Claus find you out last night, Daisy?"

"Oh yes, indeed! I found upon my table this morning a perfect treasure of books, a work-box with everything complete for use, and a perfect *bijou* of a writing-desk—the very thing I had been wishing for."

"Well done!" said Maude. "That reminds me, there was a small parcel left here that was not

intended for us; there was a name upon it, but it was not the name of any one in our house. I will get it and see if you can tell who it is for," and turning to the dressing-table she opened a drawer, and taking from it a small parcel, very neatly done up, handed it to Elma.

Her eyes rested for a moment upon the direction, and then seeking those of her friend she said, as if to herself, "'Elma! What does it mean, Maude? Was this parcel left here for me?"

"Well, Daisy, if you are not the most inquisitive creature I ever saw, to dare to ask any questions about what Santy sees fit to do. One of his first rules is 'no questions allowed at Christmas time.' so open the box and let us see what it contains."

'Elma unfastened the string, and taking off the outer covering discovered a crimson velvet jewel-case. She unclasped it, and there lay disclosed a necklace of pearls, pure and elegant, and beside it a card upon which was written, in Maude's own hand, "For my friend Daisy, with a sister's love." 'Elma would have spoken if she could, but her heart was too full, and her eloquent eyes spake forth the love and thanks her lips were unable to utter.

"Let me clasp it for you," said her friend, taking it from the box and fastening it around her neck.

We thought there was nothing wanting in 'Elma's toilet, but the necklace was certainly an improvement, and the words she could not speak before came now at her bidding, and fond and loving language from a pure and gentle heart thanked Maude for all her kindness.

"We are ready now, I believe," said Maude, "and it is past eight o'clock, so we will go down to the drawing-room, for I wish to make you acquainted with my parents before the company arrive."

The house was one blaze of light, and 'Elma felt as though she were in a fairy palace as she passed down the spacious stairway and along the marble hall. They entered the drawing-room, but found no one there; it was solitary in its magnificence. They passed on to the library, and there found those of whom they were in search.

"Mamma," said Maude approaching her mother, "this is 'Elma. I thought she would feel more at home to meet you here, and now, than an hour hence in the drawing-room." 'Elma offered her hand, but the good lady, instead of taking it, drew from her bosom a golden-cased miniature, and looking for a moment intently upon it fixed her gaze upon 'Elma with an expression of maternal love and tenderness, and said,—

"Thou saidst truly, Maude; henceforth she holds

in our affection the place of a daughter," and drawing 'Elma toward her she kissed her fondly on cheek and brow.

"I think I will save you the trouble of giving me an introduction, Maude," said Mr. Everet; "for, if I am not very much mistaken, this young lady and I have met before."

'Elma was much surprised at hearing these words, and turning to look at the speaker she discovered that he was minus an eye, and had silvery, curling hair. In short, she recognized the old gentleman who had so much excited her admiration on board the boat the day on which she made her journey to New York.

"Yes, we *have* met before," said she with unaffected pleasure; and meeting him half-way she offered both her hands, and said without a shadow of embarrassment, "I have often thought of thee since then, but never dreamed of the happiness of meeting thee thus." Turning fondly to her friend she said, "Is it real, dear Maude, or do I dream?"

Mr. Everet had heard his daughter speaking to her mother of her schoolmate and friend, and remarking upon the striking likeness which she bore to the picture they so much prized, and having questioned her with reference to 'Elma, he

declared his belief that she was the person he had met on board the boat whose great likeness to his lost child had so chained his attention. Maude and her mother were therefore prepared for the mutual recognition, and no explanation was necessary.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHRISTMAS PARTY.

THE company was fast assembling, and grace and beauty reigned supreme. Miss Fannie Bruce, arrayed in a rose-colored silk, was never better pleased with herself than upon the present occasion. Her heavy auburn tresses were intricately plaited and arranged with exquisite taste by one of the most fashionable hairdressers, and a wreath of small white roses rested becomingly on her brow. Her round, white arms were encircled by costly bracelets of opals and diamonds, and a chain of richly frosted gold, with a locket set to match the bracelets, was clasped around her neck. Well might she smile with satisfaction as she caught glimpses of her elegant figure in the mirrors that caught up and multiplied innumerable the objects reflected in their spotless surface.

Elma was so well pleased with the company in the library that she was in no haste to join the younger party in the drawing-rooms, and begged

Maude to let her remain with them yet a little longer. The rooms were fast filling, and Maude, stealing away for a moment, entered the library exclaiming, "Well, miss, this is the last time I shall come for you, so make ready and follow me immediately. One — two — right — forward — march." 'Elma fell in with the order, and Maude, having got her on the way, dropped her tone of nonsense, and preceding her friend they entered the drawing-room with becoming dignity. Never had 'Elma imagined anything half so beautiful as the sight which now met her view. Remember, dear reader, it was her first party; she had never before seen a company in full dress. She was not embarrassed in the least, and made no display of astonishment, but glided in with as much grace and ease as though she had been taught by Miss Fannie Bruce's dancing-master to make an elegant *entrée* into the drawing-room.

Fannie was very happy at this moment, for Maude had presented her brother, and Harry was at her side saying a thousand witty and agreeable things, and she thought him "perfectly irresistible." She had just made what she thought a very brilliant speech, and looked up with prettily affected simplicity into Harry's face, expecting a complimentary reply; but, to her astonishment, his eye met not

hers, and he seemed quite unconscious of what she had been saying. She glanced in the direction toward which his eyes were turned, and saw Maude and 'Elma just entering.

"Excuse me, please; I did not understand your last remark," said Harry. "We college boys are not fit for ladies' society, being given to all manner of rudeness such as the present. You were saying, Miss Bruce" —

"No matter what," said Fannie; "I never repeat."

"Pardon me this once, and I will endeavor not to offend again," humbly sued the young man. "Remember, this is my first entrance into fashionable society, and if you deal not leniently with me, I shall be discouraged at the outset. Here, Cevill, come and plead for me," said Harry, taking his friend by the button as he was passing. "I have unintentionally offended, and Miss Bruce denies me pardon. Is it not enough to make a poor fellow miserable to have offended against such a divinity? I shall do something desperate, I know I shall. It will be a mercy if I am not found drowned in the bath-tub in the morning."

"Oh, you mischievous fellow!" said Fannie, tapping his arm coquettishly with her exquisite little fan. "I saw where you were looking, and I did not wonder you were surprised. I can assure you I was

quite astonished myself at seeing that little gypsy here."

"Of whom do you speak?" said her companion.

"The little Quakeress at whom you were looking when you forgot that *I* was speaking," was the reply.

"Is she a Quakeress?" asked Harry.

"Look at her dress and see if it does not say Quaker," said the haughty beauty, spreading the ample folds of her rose-colored silk.

"It is very simple, certainly; but is she *really* a Quakeress?"

"If you listen you will hear her saying '*thee*' and '*thou*' so naturally that you will never be able to think of her in anything but a drab dress and a muslin neckerchief."

"Who is she?" asked Harry.

"She is one of Miss Willson's third-class young ladies," answered Fannie, glad of the opportunity to inform him of this fact, "and she comes from among the mountains somewhere along the Hudson—Cornwall, I believe. Maude has very strangely taken a fancy to her, and is always helping her with her lessons in school, but I did not think she would invite her here."

"I suppose she is the young lady of whom I heard

my sister speaking. I think she called her name Elma," said Harry.

"It is the same. I am sure you will be amused at her old-fashioned ways and sayings," said Fannie.

"The result of early education, I presume," said her companion.

"Or the result of no education at all," gaily laughed Fannie.

"She seems very entertaining just now, if we may judge from the attention which Mr. Stetson—to whom Maude has just introduced her—is paying to her remarks."

"Oh yes, she is entertaining beyond anything, and Phil will be amused with her, I have no doubt. She is not in the least bashful."

"You excite my curiosity, Miss Bruce, and I must take an early opportunity of being introduced to this 'little gypsy,' as you call her. Who knows but she may have a gift for fortune-telling? Such generally come from among the mountains and wild places of Nature, and perhaps she is one of the genus with a talent not yet fully developed."

"Well, Harry," said Cevillian Lee, "I have been waiting for the last quarter of an hour very patiently, trying for a chance to speak to Miss Bruce. You stopped me here to make intercession for you, but, judging from appearances, you have settled

your own business pretty satisfactorily; so, as you have no need of my services, I suppose I may proceed."

"Not at all, not at all, my friend; I would not monopolize the attention of this fair lady, but, with a magnanimity worthy of all commendation, will leave her, for the present, to your care. See that you guard well the treasure," and bowing gracefully to Fannie, Harry relinquished his place to his friend, and walked leisurely to the farther end of the room, bowing, shaking hands, and exchanging numerous friendly greetings by the way.

"Well, Harry," said his sister, placing her arm in his, "you seem well pleased with your new acquaintance. I have a friend here who is a stranger to pretty nearly all the company, and I have been waiting for an opportunity to introduce you, for I depend upon you to help me entertain her. This is her first party, and I would like it to be of pleasant memory."

She led him to where 'Elma and Philip Stetson were standing, and presented him to her friend. 'Elma bowed, and smiled with such unaffected grace and sweetness, that Harry was filled with admiration, and glancing at Philip Stetson he saw that his eyes rested upon her with an expression of

peculiar pleasure. The two young men had met before, and Harry, offering his hand, said, —

"I hope we have not interrupted your conversation, Mr. Stetson."

"Not at all," replied Philip; "indeed I am thankful you came as you did, for we had unintentionally floated into an argument, and this young lady was getting the better of me at every point."

"I did not know it had become an argument," said 'Elma; "I thought it was simply a matter of opinion."

"Originally it *was* so, but Miss Sands backed her opinion with such sound reasoning that I think it had arrived at the dignity of an argument. I had ceased to oppose her, and was about yielding the point when you made your appearance."

"I am happy to have rescued you from so perilous a position, and shall make your experience a warning that I enter not lightly into an argument with your fair opponent."

Maude smiled, for she knew the first thing her brother would do would be to call forth those powers of which Philip had spoken, and she felt pleasure in knowing how surprised he would be to find in the modest, unpretending girl a mind of such uncommon depth and feeling.

"I heard some young ladies wishing very earn-

estly for a song from Mr. Stetson," said she, turning to that young gentleman; "will you not favor them?"

"If Miss Everet is of the number, I certainly cannot refuse, provided she will lend her assistance as accompanist."

"With pleasure, if you prefer my accompaniment to your own;" and taking her seat at the piano she struck with practised hand the few brief notes of prelude to the melody which Philip named, and then his rich, full, melodious voice gave forth the touching words and notes of that most beautiful production, "*'Twere vain to tell thee all I feel.*" The profound silence that reigned told most eloquently the power of the performer over his audience.

When Maude had struck the last chord she raised her eyes to his: they met; and without the utterance of a word he was thanked. Then, when she would have left the instrument, gently laying his hand on hers, he said,—

"I have the right to call now, I believe, and in the exercise of that right I shall claim a song from Miss Everet."

"I submit" said she, resuming her seat; "but as you desired *my* assistance here, I shall request *yours* in exchange."

Selecting from the music before her she placed upon the rack one of Handel's touching melodies. Never was the exquisite composition given with greater taste and feeling. At one moment the voices rose rich and powerful, breathing forth the very soul of the composer, and again they sank to the gentlest murmuring—still every word distinct and audible—until the hearts of those who heard stood still lest their breathing should disturb the atmosphere of melody by which they were surrounded.

Harry Everet and 'Elma were standing where Maude and Philip had left them. Few words had passed, but Harry had been deeply interested in watching the changes of his companion's countenance, as she listened delightedly to the music. At one moment her eyes would fill with tears, and her small hands clasp each other in sympathy with the melancholy notes; and then, as the performers passed on to more enlivening strains, her face would brighten with a smile, and the little foot tap gently the soft Turkey carpet, and she seemed unconscious for the time that there was any listener save herself; and quite oblivious of the fact that Harry Everet was at her side, with his keen, searching glance bent full upon her face.

Even in that Eden came the green-eyed monster,

and there was one to whom the music was all discord, because her heart was out of tune; and as her beautiful hazel eyes rested upon Harry and 'Elma a thousand hissing serpents seemed starting from their light. Aye, cast them down, proud Fannie, and veil their jealous glances. Years hence, when thou shalt better understand the world, thou wilt learn caution, and keep thy hatred in thy heart which now seems starting from thy eyes.

"You are fond of music, Miss Sands," said Harry, when Maude had left the piano.

"Yes," she replied, with a deep sigh of satisfaction. "I *love* it, when it springs up warmly from the heart and calls forth that sweet, heavenly sentiment, sympathy. I love it when the birds sing, as I used to hear them in the dear old woods at Cornwall. I think I shall never hear such music as theirs again."

"Perhaps not," said Harry; "for we are told that with our childhood passes away the *ability* for intense enjoyment, and we remember with *delight* circumstances that occurred when we were children which would scarcely move us to *pleasure* in after years. I see they are forming for a quadrille. Will you favor me?"

"I have not yet learned to dance," said 'Elma, "but I shall be delighted to look on. I will sit here

on this sofa while thee finds a partner and enjoys the dance."

Suiting the action to the word she seated herself just as Mr. and Mrs. Everet entered the room, and they, observing her in a quiet corner, crossed over and took seats beside her. Harry could not withstand the enlivening strains that met his ear, and excusing himself to 'Elma he selected a partner and joined the dance.

Dancing was Fannie Bruce's forte; and now she was in her element. Harry was not her partner; but he was not with 'Elma, and she was satisfied. Maude and Philip were side by side; whether they danced or sang, by some unaccountable sympathy they were constantly drawn together. Cevillian Lee was happy everywhere, singing with one, dancing with another, and flirting with all,—a gay, light-hearted noble, spirited-half boy, half man, luxuriating in every moment of existence.

All was life and merriment, and time passed on such downy pinions that night had waned and the small hours of the morning were stealing stealthily away before the company were aware. 'Elma had enjoyed an hour with her new-made friends in the corner where we left her, and many were the solicitations that Maude had received for an introduction to her. Although she did not dance, she was never

alone, and Harry, after going through with a very limited number of quadrilles, found that it was tiresome work, and offering his arm to 'Elma they promenaded for a while, chatting pleasantly and familiarly upon numerous subjects. Her mind was so fresh and natural, and her ideas so correct, and expressed in such unaffected and pleasing style, that he was charmed by her very simplicity. Thus passed the hours away, and the drawing-room, were nearly empty.

"Good-night, Mr. Everet," said Fannie Bruce, popping her bewitchingly hooded head in at the door, which Harry was just passing. "Good-night. Could you find it in your heart to shake hands with a friend to whom you have not spoken for the last two hours? I conclude you have been having your fortune told. Did the gypsy tell you that a young lady with long black curls, and large black eyes to match, had designs upon you? If she did *not*, then I am a better fortune-teller than she."

"Good-night, Miss Bruce," said Harry, extending his hand, as she offered hers. "I have not willingly neglected you, and to judge from the numbers by which you have been surrounded, there would have been but little chance for me, had I aspired to your smiles. I dare say you have never

thought of me since I left you, until the present moment."

"*Ungrateful!*" said Fannie, throwing a tone of sadness into her usually merry voice. "Say, rather, that you were so carried away with other eyes and smiles, that you forgot there was a circle that needed your presence to make it complete."

"Come, Fan," called out Philip Stetson, who had been her escort upon the occasion, "shall you never have finished talking? That tongue of yours is perfectly indefatigable. I shall call upon Miss Willson, and see if there be not some process of education, whereby a young lady's conversation may be limited to the bounds of reason. Good-night, Everet," and playfully taking Fannie by the arm, he led her away, declaring she would never have courage to go of her own accord.

The last guest had departed, the last carriage rolled away, and the elegant mansion was quiet once more. In the drawing-rooms, where music and dancing, and the hum of merry voices had so lately reigned, there remained no token, save here and there a crushed flower, or knot of ribbon, lost by some careless wearer, or thrown aside as some trivial annoyance or disappointment had rendered it valueless. Oh, how eloquent is the language of a deserted ball-room, when the guests have

departed, and the lights fall, as it were, spectrally upon the mute tokens of past hilarity! Hearts which came full of hope and pleasurable anticipations have gone away disappointed and sad. Eyes which sparkled with enjoyment, and gratified rivalry in the early evening, before its close have been made brilliant with tears; and some, who counted on but little pleasure, have departed with pleasant memories, and tokens for after thought. So little can we control surrounding circumstances, even for the short space of an evening.

There was one, to whom the present occasion had been a scene of unalloyed delight. In her heart there was neither envy nor malice. She saw that others were more richly dressed than she, but the sparkle of their diamonds kindled no flame of jealousy within her bosom. She could look upon the graceful dancers, as they moved in unison and harmony to the exquisite music, and no spark of envy stirred within her heart, as she gazed, and murmured admiringly, "How beautiful!" And when Maude's finely cultivated voice claimed the attention and admiration of those by whom she was surrounded, 'Elma's thoughts, ascending with the pure, silvery tones, went up gratefully to heaven, for the blessing of such a friend.

When Maude had bid good-night to the last departing guest, she sought 'Elma, and found her in the library, seated on a sofa, between Mr. and Mrs. Everet, chatting as merrily as though it were three o'clock in the afternoon, instead of that hour in the morning.

"Well, Daisy," said Maude, "if you are as weary as I am you will be willing to retire without further notice. Good-night, dear father and mother; you may give the first kiss to 'Elma, I shall not be jealous," and taking her friend by the hand they both received a good-night token of affection from the fond parents, and a "God bless you, my children."

"I think there is a great deal of partiality shown here," said Harry, who entered with Cevillian Lee, just in time to see the last kiss exchanged. "But I suppose we must submit, Cevil, and be content with the approved form of leavetaking," and placing his hand upon his heart and making a very graceful and elegant bow, he said, with a great amount of mock gravity, "Young ladies, I wish you a very good night, and many pleasant and happy dreams."

"By the way, Miss Sands," said Cevillian Lee, "you must remember what you dream to-night; you know whatever it may be, it will come to pass, as the fortune-tellers say. This will be your first night beneath this roof, and your dreams are sure to be

fulfilled. We shall expect to have them related at breakfast to-morrow morning."


"That depends," said 'Elma, as she and Maude each with an arm around the other's waist, glided playfully out of the room calling back a cheerful "*Bon soir*."

There was much to be said, but they were too weary to talk over the occurrences of the evening then, and in a marvellously short space of time they were sleeping, with their heads resting upon one pillow, and their arms twined lovingly around each other's neck.

Silence and darkness, what ministers are ye! Both reigned now over the slumbering city. The sable drapery of night came down and wrapped the world in an impenetrable veil; and that mysterious music, born of silence, inaudible to the external ear, but sounding ever in the deep recesses of the brain, as it were the flight of Time on his swift, untiring pinions, murmured its monotonous whisperings to the ear of waking wretchedness.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DREAM.

HAT a glorious morning!" said Maude, as she put aside the rich drapery of the window and looked out at the brilliant sunshine quivering in the clear, frosty air; "just the morning for a sleigh-ride; the only thing wanting is some snow—rather an important item to be lacking. Harry and Cevillian have promised to take me out the very first snow that comes; now, three spoils a company, you know, so I shall claim you for the fourth person when the occasion requires."

"Oh, would not that be delicious!" cried 'Elma; "there is nothing I would like so much." Then checking herself, she added, "If Cousin Catharine is willing."

"I am going to make sure of that to-day," said Maude. "Mamma is going into the city to shop, and she has promised to call upon your cousin with me, and ask her permission for you to go out with us sometimes for a drive."

"Oh, Maude, how thoughtful thou art, always thinking of other people's pleasure; so unselfish, so loving and generous."

"Aha! turned flatterer, have you? Now I protest against anything of that kind. Papa says flatterers are dangerous people, and if he gets an inkling that you are practising anything of that kind your popularity will be short lived, I can assure you; so mind, no more of it, at your peril. You may say 'Maude, thou art a very clever little girl,'—*Yankee* clever, I mean,—but not a word of flattery."

"I speak truth, in all honesty and sincerity, and that is no flattery," replied 'Elma.

"Well, well, thou art a wilful little Daisy, so have thy own way," said her friend; "and now, as it is ten o'clock, and we are both quite ready, we will go and see if there is any breakfast to be had."

It would be hard to tell which of the two looked the most lovely as they entered the breakfast-room. Maude wore a bright pink merino, with facings of white silk, made to fit closely around the throat, and edged with a frill of rich lace. The sleeves were close at the wrist, and finished with a lace ruffle which set off the delicate hand to great advantage. 'Elma wore a pearl-colored merino, without trimmings, and made, like Maude's, close at the throat, and finished with a band of white leas folds crossed

in front and formed into a graceful bow. Folds of the same material finished the sleeves at the wrist, and completed the inexpensive but chaste and becoming toilet.

Mr. and Mrs. Everet, Harry, and Cevillian were already in the breakfast-room, and the two latter amused themselves by making remarks upon young ladies who kept the family waiting for breakfast until there was danger of their fainting from sheer exhaustion.

"Well, let's lose no time then," said Maude, "for I have no desire to witness a fainting scene this morning, and if my noble brother will have the goodness to touch the bell, breakfast will be here in a twinkling."

"The sooner the better," said Harry as the bell-wire trembled beneath his energetic touch, and in the space of a very few moments the table presented a very inviting aspect, and those by whom it was surrounded were doing ample justice to its charms.

"Now, Miss Sands," said Cevillian Lee, when 'Elma declined being helped to anything more, and declared she had breakfasted most abundantly, "this is just the time for you to tell your dream. You *had* one, I am quite certain, for no young lady ever passed a dreamless night after attending a gay

party; so let's have it, if you please. It will be a capital appetizer for the rest of our breakfast, Hal."

"Yes, do indulge us Miss Sands," responded Harry. "Cevil has a perfect mania for dreaming, and listening to other people's dreams, and I have no doubt but he had one last night which he will exchange with you."

"I *did* dream last night," said 'Elma; "and if I believed, as your friend says many do, that on account of its being the first night I have spent in this house my dreams would be fulfilled, I should be puzzled to know how to interpret it. It was so vague, so unnatural, that I cannot ascribe to it any meaning. I attach no importance to the wild visions of the dreaming mind."

"Oh, do tell us your dream, Daisy!" said Maude.

"Yes, tell it, Miss Sands," chimed in Harry and Cevillian.

"I will tell it upon one condition," said she, "and that is that these young gentlemen for the future call me 'Elma. I am always called so, and it sounds more pleasant to my ear than the more formal way in which young ladies are usually addressed. Is the condition accepted?"

"*Unanimously*; and in exchange we shall insist upon Harry and Cevillian taking the place of Messrs. Everet and Lee."

"With pleasure, if such is thy wish, and that point settled, I will proceed to redeem my promise. I thought it was summer, and I was at home—at Cornwall. I was walking in the woods, alone, gathering flowers. I carried a basket on my arm, in which I placed them. Presently I had it filled, and sat down upon the grass to rest. I began selecting the flowers and arranging them, and was surprised to find among them many withered ones. I took out such as were faded, and threw them away, and went on as before filling my basket, but as often as I filled it and sat down to arrange them I found that the greater part were withered. I did not think it strange that it should be so, but always went on patiently gathering more. Presently the path I had been following led me up to a beautiful little church covered with green vines. The bells were chiming, and a number of persons were going in and out. I felt curious to know what was taking place, and went in, among others, to satisfy my curiosity. When I entered the door, I saw a couple standing at the altar dressed as for a marriage. The bride was all in white, and a large veil fell over her face and figure, so that I did not recognize her. The groom was dressed in black, with white gloves, and his back was toward me, so that I could not see his face. A minister in a black robe was

standing before them with an open book in his hand, but he only looked at them with a melancholy, compassionate expression, and uttered not a word. I saw that every one present was dressed as for some extra occasion, and this made me think of my own appearance. I looked down at my dress, and was surprised to find myself clothed in black. A large jet cross, suspended from a heavy black chain, was hanging around my neck, and rested just over my heart. I looked into the basket of flowers on my arm—they were all withered and faded. I pressed forward, determined to see the faces of those who stood at the altar. As I came near, and in front of them, the minister spoke, and in a deep, solemn voice uttered these words: 'Dust to dust, and ashes to ashes.' As the last words dropped from his lips, the bride raised her veil, and lo! I recognized in the couple at the altar my father and mother! With the shock of surprise I awoke. Just then Maude's cheerful voice exclaimed, 'What a glorious morning!' and I have never thought of my dream since that moment till you spoke of it."

"It is an impressive one," said Harry, who had dropped his knife and fork when she commenced. "Let me congratulate you, Miss—*pardonnez moi*—let me congratulate you, 'Elma, that you have no superstitious proclivities. My friend Cevil here

would rack his brain for a month trying to solve a dream like that."

"Be quiet, Hal, and finish your breakfast. Your friend Cevil' can speak for himself; and as for dreaming, perhaps you would like me to tell of whom you were talking in your sleep half the night. You are not content with dreaming, but must give utterance to the vagaries of your slumbers, and keep a fellow awake half the night listening to your nonsense."

Mr. Everet looked at 'Elma and smiled. 'Twas a very sad smile, and his eye rested upon her full of thoughtful kindness, but he did not say whether he did or did not believe in dreams; and his wife, turning to Maude, asked if they had been telling ghost stories before they went to sleep, to which she replied, that they had too much of reality to converse upon just then, to waste any time upon the supernatural.

Harry had seen the bottom of his last cup of coffee, and as Mrs. Everet was going into the city to shop, as well as to call upon Mrs. Ring, for the purpose of obtaining her permission for 'Elma to accompany Maude when she should claim her company for a drive, it was proposed that they should set out at once, it being already past eleven. A very few minutes sufficed for the toilet, and

the carriage, with its noble pair of jet-black horses drew up at the door just as the ladies descended in readiness to drive. Everything about the turn, out bespoke the cultivated mind and refined taste of the owner. There was no show, no pretension, but everything was rich, substantial, and elegant. The noble animals seemed to feel the dignity of belonging to such a master, and curved their glossy necks, and snuffed the air of the clear frosty morning with an almost human show of pride.

"Good-morning, gentlemen," said Maude, as her brother and his friend looked out at them from the library. "Not so fast, Miss, if you please. We shall see *you* back again, I suppose, but from 'Elma we would have more than a formal good-morning," said Harry; "a shake of the hand at least, to assure us we are friends, and an assurance that her last night's dream shall not frighten her away from us for the future."

"Farewell," said 'Elma, as she gave him her hand. "And farewell, Cevillian. I shall not soon forget the pleasant hours I have passed here, nor the friends who have made me so happy." Then seeing Mr. Everet approaching from the library she advanced to meet him, and offering her hand she looked into his face with an expression of reverence, and said, "Farewell, friend Everet.

If I could speak what I feel, I would thank thee for all thy kindness. Come, Maude, and lend me words to tell how happy I have been. Now my thoughts go back to the morning when I met thee first, feeling so homesick and forlorn. How little did I think then that I should ever stand before thee thus, with my hand in thine, and Maude, dear Maude, looking upon me with those tender, affectionate eyes. Farewell! when thou askest a blessing for Maude, wilt thou not ask one also for 'Elma?"

"Thy name shall be laid upon the altar with hers," he replied. Her grasp tightened for an instant, as if in acknowledgment of that assurance; then, withdrawing her hand, she followed her companions down the steps and into the carriage. The door closed, the horses, obedient to the signal, started forward, and 'Elma, silent and thoughtful, reclined among the luxurious cushions.

CHAPTER IX.

WHICH TREATS ON VARIOUS TOPICS.

THE call upon Cousin Catharine proved favorable to Maude and 'Elma's wishes. An hour was spent in friendly and social conversation, in which Mrs. Everet related the history of the life and death of her lost darling, and showed the miniature to which 'Elma bore so striking a likeness. 'Elma related the incident of her recognition of Mr. Everet, and her cousin remembered her admiration of the kind old gentleman whom they had met on their journey. 'Lidie divided her attention between Maude and 'Elma, and Hope, with her merry heart brimming over with fun, chatted first with one and then with another. Maude was greatly amused by her wit and drollery, and invited her most kindly to visit her with 'Elma.

"Thee is very kind, and I am much obliged to thee," Hope replied, "but there are no little girls there, and sister says I talk so much people get tired

of hearing me. Sometimes she begs me to be quiet and then I run off and tease Joe for an hour, to let her have a little rest. Poor Joe! he bears it like a little martyr. I don't know what I should do if it were not for Joe."

Mrs. Everet rose to depart, with the conviction that she had seldom passed so pleasant an hour when going through the routine of her more fashionable calls. She had obtained permission for 'Elma to visit them without ceremony, and gave the kindest invitation to Cousin Catharine that the acquaintance thus begun should be continued by all members of their families. That good lady assured her nothing would give her more pleasure, and whilst she evinced the greatest satisfaction at the kindness and interest manifested by her visitor, she never for a moment forgot the dignity of blood which made her the equal, and *more* than the equal, of many who were her superiors in wealth and worldly position. Mrs. Everet attached but little importance to the mere possession of wealth. Having always lived in the enjoyment of all its luxuries, she made it of but little importance in the selection of her friends. In Cousin Catharine she recognized the true Christian woman—the refined and natural lady, living in the simplicity of the religion which she professed, and as such she already

admired and esteemed her. There was much kindness in the parting, and when 'Lidie came to claim a good-by kiss, she said to Maude, "Will thee tum again thum time? I heard Couthin 'Elma thay she loved thee very much; will thee tum again?"

"Oh yes," replied Maude, kissing the coral lips, "now that 'Lidie has invited me, I shall come again; and she must call me Cousin Maude now, for I am 'Elma's sister."

"Oh, ithent that nithe?" said the delighted child, clasping her tiny hands; "and that ith the reathon she loved thee, tho. 'Lidie'll love thee too, Couthin Maude," and kissing her again, she released her hold upon her dress, and danced about the room in the most fantastic manner, to express the delight she felt at the discovery of her new relative. When they were gone, 'Elma related all the particulars of her visit, and of the party, not forgetting to tell Hope how beautiful Fannie Bruce looked, and how gracefully she danced. She showed the necklace, that Maude had given her, to Cousin Catharine, who, knowing better its value, was much more surprised than she herself had been, with reference to it.

"It is very chaste and elegant," said she, "and shows they have placed a high estimate upon thy mind and intrinsic qualities. See that thou do

not disappoint them. Let thy thoughts and actions be as pure as this beautiful jewel, and thy friends will never have reason to regret the time when they opened their hearts to thee, and placed thee there—as Friend Everet says they have done—beside their own dear children."

"With such an example as thine, dear cousin, and such a friend as Maude, I must be wicked, indeed, if I could go astray."

"No danger of 'Elma going astray," said Hope, who generally put an end to all serious conversation. "Judy says she is 'a borned angel,' and I guess Judy knows. Whenever I steal into the kitchen and salt her coffee, and pepper Joe's meat, until every mouthful sets him to sneezing, she rolls up the whites of her eyes, and says, 'Lor, Miss Hope, why can't yer 'have yerself, like Miss Almy do? Jes see now, what yer bin gone and done, wid yer nonsense. Dat poor chile's koffed till he's brack in de face. Yer can't cotch Miss Almy at no sich capers!' To talk of her going astray is ridiculous. If it was *me*, now, there might be a possibility of such a thing," and tapping 'Elma fondly on the cheek, she said, "I am so glad thee has come home. I have wandered about the house all the morning, not knowing what to do with myself."

'Elma smiled, as Hope ran on from one subject to another, scarcely stopping long enough to take breath. It would be difficult to say which of the two was most happy; the quiet, thoughtful maiden, with her heart full of pleasant memories, or the gay, light-hearted girl, whose exuberance of spirits constantly bubbled up and flowed over, finding vent in the exercise of her voluble tongue.

The few remaining days of vacation passed pleasantly away. By 'Elma and Hope they were spent very quietly. Not so by Maude and Fannie Bruce. There were several parties to be attended to in the fashionable world, and there was dressing, and dancing, and flirting enough, to satisfy even the almost insatiable Fannie. She was already beginning to be quoted a belle, and more than one unsuspecting youth had fallen victim to her charms. When we speak of flirting, we do not wish it to be understood that Maude was guilty of anything of the kind. She was superior to any such conduct, and while she was free, easy, and courteous to all, her manners were such as to inspire respect as well as admiration, and if any gentleman was misled with reference to her feelings, it might be imputed to the weakness of his own intellect; certainly not to anything censurable in her conduct or intentions.

Philip Stetson saw and appreciated all her admirable and lovable qualities. He did not think her a beauty, but when he was with her he found so much to study—so much that was new and pleasing to him, that time rippled away imperceptibly, and there was in her society a charm he failed to find elsewhere. Fannie Bruce saw all this, and though she herself admired Maude, and deep down in her heart bitterly envied the excellence she could never hope to attain to, she had her reasons for wishing to disturb the smooth current of their intercourse and render them uncomfortable—if *possible*, unhappy. Cousin Phil had dared remonstrate with her upon the unlimited license she gave her tongue, and made a comparison between her and Maude, the result of which was by no means flattering to herself. And then, too, Harry Everet, upon whom she had counted as an easy conquest, had thus far been proof against her charms, and although she had danced and coquetted with him at three parties, no marks of admiration beyond a few frivolous and commonplace compliments had rewarded her efforts. She could forgive him all this, but he had left her side for the purpose of an introduction to 'Elma, and instead of returning to laugh with her over that young lady's awkwardness and

inexperience, he remained conversing with her, and showing her numerous tokens of respect and admiration, which the proud Fannie would have given worlds to receive.

CHAPTER X.

"DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND."

THE last party that Maude attended, took place on the Friday evening preceding the opening of school on the following Monday. Fannie was there, and Philip, and Harry, and Cevillian. The party was given by one of Miss Willson's young ladies—a classmate with Maude and Fannie. Minnie Marston was an amiable, kind-hearted girl, with a pretty, childish face, and an innocent mind of no great depth. How she ever made her way up to the first class in school is more than we can tell; but as the terms for advanced pupils exceeded by a considerable amount those for the lower classes, and Minnie's father had plenty of money, and spent it very freely for the benefit and improvement of his children, no doubt Miss Willson understood the matter and placed Minnie where she belonged.

The party was gotten up with due reference to fashion and elegance, as was also the company who

filled the spacious drawing-rooms. Minnie, who was an extreme blond, appeared in a dress of fleecy light-blue tissue, elaborately trimmed with flounces of the same material, which, airy and graceful in its appearance, set off her slight figure to great advantage. Her jewelry was of pearls, and corresponded most becomingly with the delicate hue of her dress. Her hair—of a light-golden hue, and very abundant—was plainly arranged and gathered into a net of fine, golden thread, upon which was strung, at regular intervals, small pearls, and from the left side depended two small pearl tassels which were scarcely whiter than the graceful neck upon which they rested. She was very beautiful, as she glided around among her guests, smiling and chatting with all. She had some rare qualities; she was unselfish and truthful, and we can forgive a great deal for the sake of those two noble principles.

Fannie Bruce, in a delicate corn-colored silk, with trimmings of rich lace, was looking both beautiful and brilliant, and Maude, in pure white, was never more lovely. Her dress was of the richest silk, and perfectly plain. Her father's Christmas gifts—the diamond bracelets and necklace—were the only jewelry worn, and a single white camelia was tastefully placed among her curls.

There were the Misses Stanley—two fine, showy young ladies—and their cousin, Miss Gordon; and Miss Nettie Livingston—a bewitching little brunette, in crimson silk, with black lace trimmings, and crimson roses in her hair, who turned the heads and bewitched the hearts of half the gentlemen in the room, before the evening was over. There, too, was Miss Carlton, and Miss Wallace, and Miss Murray, and a host of others whom we should like to describe, but, as they have little or nothing to do with our story, we must pass them by without further notice, humbly begging their pardon for not stopping to make their acquaintance. Music and dancing soon dispelled all feelings and appearance of formality, and all went "merry as a marriage bell."

Now, Minnie had a cousin,—a *country* cousin, dear readers,—and Minnie's cousin had come to town to spend the holidays at "Uncle Marston's." "Uncle Marston" had commenced life in the country himself, but, finding his abilities too energetic for the style of transacting business in the country, he had removed to New York, where he carried on such a thriving business as a flour and produce merchant, as soon filled his coffers to overflowing. He was a man of fine mind and taste, and by mingling with the world, he soon acquired sufficient polish to

carry him into the best society. He was known as a man of honor and integrity, and as such was looked up to and respected. He married a well-bred city lady, and settled in an elegant home in the most aristocratic portion of the city. His brother Isaac had settled down on the homestead, a grand old farm of several hundred acres, well tilled, and yielding a rich reward for the pride and care that its owner bestowed upon its cultivation. Mary Ann was his only daughter, and as such had been greatly petted and indulged. Her father never having received a liberal education himself, and in his quiet corner of the world never having felt the necessity of it, was quite satisfied that his daughter could learn all that was requisite to a polite education at the schools that were available in their immediate neighborhood. Consequently, Mary Ann spoke a great deal of bad English, and a very little of worse French. This evening was her *début* into fashionable society, and she had felt no little excitement upon the subject of her toilet. Minnie and her mother had succeeded in arranging this difficulty, and, when dressed, Mary Ann declared herself quite satisfied with her appearance.

She was short and stout, and her cheeks were like two full-blown peonies; her eyes were very large, and of an exceedingly light blue; her hair

was of a dead, flaxen color, and grew in an abundance quite astonishing to behold. The dress that her aunt had selected for her use on the evening of which we write was a delicate purple silk, and was made with particular reference to her size and figure. The skirt was very long and flowing, and gave her dumpy little person quite an air of gentility. Her hair was neatly arranged, without any ornament—its abundance rendering such quite unnecessary. Mary Ann suggested that a scarlet feather, which she had brought with her in case she should be required to dress her hair for an evening company, would, in *her* opinion, be a great improvement; but her aunt and cousin discouraged the idea, and she somewhat reluctantly gave up the intention of wearing the cherished ornament.

Minnie had beguiled her into the drawing-room before any of the company arrived, for notwithstanding her natural kindness of heart and really warm feelings of affection for her cousin, she could not help feeling a little uncomfortable at the prospect of her being brought into contact with the polished and elegant society by which she would shortly be surrounded. Mary Ann remained quietly seated on the sofa where Minnie had left her, talking with a plain little girl who had been the first arrival, until the rooms were pretty nearly filled; then, excusing

herself to her companion in a most elaborate speech of apology, she slipped quietly out of the door near which she was seated, and hastily made her way up to her own room. Out of breath with the exertion of ascending two flights of stairs, she seated herself before her trunk and brought forth the prohibited scarlet feather; then, turning to the mirror, she placed it in her hair, letting it fall low upon her shoulder, and in its descent sweep coquettishly her cheek—just as she had worn it at one of their village balls, when she had been declared the belle.

"There now!" said she, as she looked admiringly at herself, "if that ain't an improvement, then Mary Ann Marston don't know when she looks good, *that's* all. Aunt didn't know how becomin' I could fix it, or she wouldn't have said '*don't wear it!*'"

She took up her gloves and handkerchief, which she had laid aside while arranging the feather, and hastily returned to the drawing-room. She had not been missed, and taking her original seat upon the sofa she chatted away to the little girl—who was still there—seemingly quite unconscious of the fantastic appearance she presented. She had not noticed before that her companion was a great laugher; in fact, she had thought her of rather a solemn turn; but *now* she laughed at everything that was said, and then she covered her face with

her handkerchief, and laughed when they were neither of them saying anything; and Minnie's cousin thought she had never seen so pleasant and lively a little girl.

Fannie Bruce asked Minnie who was the young lady with a soldier's feather in her hair, and looking in the direction indicated she saw—to her great dismay—Mary Ann, chatting and laughing in the gayest manner possible, and the feather keeping time to every motion of her head.

"She is a niece of papa's, from the country," said Minnie. She tried to say "a cousin of mine," but Fannie's eye was upon her, and she feared her sarcasm; so she said "a niece of papa's." "She is so good and kind-hearted a girl," she continued, "that we are very fond of having her with us, notwithstanding her peculiarities upon some subjects,—*dress*, for instance."

Maude Everet, seeing the smile upon Fannie's lips, and the color that rose to Minnie's cheek as she acknowledged her unfashionable relative, said,—

"Will you introduce me to her, Minnie? I have some country cousins too, and I do so enjoy having them visit us; there is so much of nature about them and so little of art. It is quite refreshing to hear them speaking just what they think and feel.

Come, introduce me!" and taking her friend's arm, they approached Mary Ann, and Minnie gave the desired introduction. Upon being told by her cousin that this was her friend and schoolmate, Miss Everet, Mary Ann exclaimed, with a delighted smile,—

"Oh, she is, is she? *Bon swire*, Miss Everet, I'm glad to meet you. *Prennie-zun-sage*," and tucking up her dress, so as to occupy the least possible room, she offered Maude a seat on the sofa, which was already pretty well filled, so that young lady declined the proffered civility, saying she preferred standing.

"How odd!" said Mary Ann. "Now, I never stand up when I can set down. We think, in the country, it's very tiresome to stand up when we hain't got nothin' to do, but I b'lieve New York folks is different from we in every single thing."

"I suppose so," said Maude; "what is appropriate and convenient in the city, would be quite uncomfortable and out of place in the country. Which do you prefer, Miss Marston,—the city or the country?"

"Well, I can scarce tell yit, for I hain't been here long enough to decide. I think if I was to stay a spell I should like here jist as well as to hum. Uncle, and aunt, and Minnie make it so pleasant

like that I can't feel humsick to save me. I never was to a party in the city afore, and it seems dreadful queer the way they do things here. Now, out our way, the ladies and gentlemen all git interduced into the room and their names called out, so every body knows who the other is, and you can go up and talk to *any* body, and there ain't nothin' thought of it; but *here*, it seems every body must be interduced perticular afore there can be a word said. Now in that respect I like the country best—it's more sociable like."

Maude was amused, but she did not allow an expression to cross her face that could convey the slightest idea of ridicule. Poor Minnie! she had thought the red feather an insurmountable obstacle to her evening's enjoyment, but when she heard her cousin speaking French to Maude, seemingly bent upon showing off her education, she could not remain to hear the conversation, but turned away and mingled with the crowd.

Fannie Bruce was standing near enough to hear what Mary Ann was saying—for she did not speak in a very subdued tone—and as Minnie passed she heard her say to Philip Stetson,—

"Now Maude is happy, I suppose; she has another green country girl to patronize. What a pity 'Elma is not here—or *Miss Sands*, I suppose

we must call her, now that she is brought out into fashionable society."

"I do not know if Miss Everet is happy or not at this moment," replied her companion, "but I *do* know she is unselfish in giving her time and attention to one in whose company she can take but little pleasure. She would not so abuse the hospitality of our generous host as to ridicule his relative and guest; and as for Miss Sands, I have heard more than one of your gentlemen friends wishing she was here. By the way, why is she not here, do you know?"

"She was not invited, I presume. No doubt she would be here if she had received an invitation. It was an indiosyncrasy of Maude's inviting her to their house, and in any one but Maude Everet would have been considered ridiculous."

"You are mistaken, Miss Bruce," said Mr. Thurston, who had overheard all Fannie had been saying, — by the way, Mr. Thurston was a great favorite with Fannie; "you are mistaken with reference to the invitation. I was asking Miss Everet why her friend was not here, and she tells me the relative with whom she is staying wished her to remain at home this evening, for some particular reason; so she sent a regret, and, by Jove, I think hers is

not the only regret felt. I have heard her asked for a dozen times already."

"Indeed!" was Fannie's only reply. She was vexed that he should have heard her remarks with reference to 'Elma.

"Will you favor me, Miss Bruce?" said Mr. Thurston. "I see they are forming for a quadrille," and offering his arm they took their places in the set.

Maude and Cevillian Lee were their opposites, and Minnie and Harry Everet occupied the third position. A fourth couple was still wanting, and as those already placed turned to see who was coming to fill the vacancy, they discovered, to the amusement of some and the consternation of others, Mary Ann Marston hanging on the arm of Philip Stetson. Maude had introduced them just as Cevillian Lee came to ask her hand for the dance. Thus situated, Philip could not very well avoid asking Mary Ann to be his partner. She accepted without hesitation, and as they took their places in the quadrille, she dropped a very low and spreading courtesy, and the scarlet feather waved until Minnie's face became as red as the innocent cause of her vexation.

The top couples went through the figure gracefully and elegantly, but Mary Ann thought them

quite inanimate, and silently made up her mind that she would just show them a little specimen of dancing as *was* dancing. When the side couples started off to repeat the figure, she gave her hand with a flourish worthy the occasion, and cut the pigeon-wing, and pirouetted in a style that did ample justice to her intention. Fannie Bruce could not control her risible faculties, and making a remark to that effect to her partner she laughed until the tears stood in her eyes; and *he* laughed, not so much at Mary Ann as at Fannie. Poor Minnie! she was in a perfect state of despair, and, notwithstanding she was a very beautiful dancer, she went on making mistakes until Mary Ann declared—loud enough for every one to hear—that she should be obliged to give "Cousin" some lessons, for she did not half understand the thing.

Philip would have given a great deal to have been out of sight and hearing, where he could indulge in a hearty laugh without wounding any one's feelings; but as it was he went through the ordeal bravely, never once by look or action giving any one reason to suppose he thought his partner comical, or fantastic, or unlike those by whom she was surrounded. The exercise made her very warm, and the drops of perspiration stood out like little beads on her forehead, and, in spite of the free use she

made of her handkerchief, sometimes trickled in small streams down her cheeks. In course of time the dance terminated, and Philip led his partner to a seat and used her fan for her with as great a show of care and interest as though she had been the most fragile and graceful creature in the room. He felt for Minnie,—who was a great favorite in society,—and for her sake he controlled his feelings and put away the disposition to draw out Mary Ann and amuse himself with her oddities and peculiar views. He had a keen appreciation of the ridiculous, and this was a great temptation to him, for she was very original, and although uneducated and unpolished, she was full of wit and humor, and he saw in her a great deal to amuse where a less keen observer would have found only matter for ridicule. It so happened he had given her a seat very near his cousin Fannie, who was still amusing herself and her partner at Mary Ann's expense. That young lady, unfortunately, overheard every word they were saying, and quietly made up her mind that Miss Bruce should hear from her before the evening was over—and when Mary Ann made up her mind to a thing, it might be considered done.

Hour after hour glided by, and the evening was drawing to a close. The last dance was about to

come off. It was the merry old figure known as the Virginia reel, and Mary Ann's favorite dance. She was going through it with Uncle Marston, whom she had persuaded to be her partner. In honor of his age, as well as his position as host, he and his partner were placed at the top of the set. All eyes were upon Mary Ann, as with a double pigeon-wing she rushed forward to meet the bottom gentleman. Never, to her own mind, had she danced with such style and spirit as upon the present occasion. When the usual amount of forwarding, turning, and *dos-à-dosing* had been gone through with, and she had turned her partner, and had gone outside and up through the middle, and commenced the confusing ordeal of turning alternately her partner and each succeeding gentleman, *then* came the crowning grace of all. Not one mistake was she guilty of, and the longer she danced the more lively she became, until it seemed as though her whole frame were strung on wires. Finally, the last gentleman was turned, and with a double cross-foot step she went down the centre once more and reached in safety the bottom. Still her duties were not over, and fresh as ever she cut the inimitable pigeon-wing, and, if anything, danced higher, and with a greater flourish than in the beginning. The top couple now took up the figure, and Mary Ann's reign as

leader was at an end. She found plenty of work now for the handkerchief, for the room was warm and the exercise great, and as she wiped the perspiration from her crimson cheeks she cast an exulting glance up the long line of smiling faces, and wondered what they thought of country dancing *now*.

As we have said before, this was the last dance, and at its conclusion the company repaired to the dressing-rooms preparatory to taking leave—all but a very few who had remained in the drawing-room until the crowd above should become less dense. Among these were Maude, and Minnie, Mr. and Mrs. Marston, Harry Everet, Cevillian Lee, Mary Ann, and Philip Stetson. Mary Ann was speaking to Harry, who, full of fun, was enjoying her comparisons between city and country parties. She was explaining to him how such things were conducted in the village near which she lived, when Fanny Bruce, warmly cloaked and hooded, entered the room, and approaching Minnie began telling her how much she regretted having forgotten a book that she intended bringing her, and went on to state that it was the most beautiful thing she had ever read, and that she had had it in her hand the moment before starting, but had laid

it down for the purpose of fastening her glove, and so had come off without it.

"Well, that's a pity!" said Mary Ann, who had taken a step nearer to Fanny while she was speaking, "a great pity! But that wasn't the most important thing you forgot."

"Indeed!" said Fannie, greatly surprised; "I was not aware of anything else."

"Well," said Mary Ann, "perhaps you're so used to goin' without 'em that you haven't missed 'em, but I discovered it purty nigh as soon as you come in; and when I heard you talkin' to that tall ginteel lookin' pardner of yourn about a certain young woman here, and laughin' and ticklin' yourself because she choosed to wear a red feather instead of a white posey in her head, says I to myself, 'that young woman left her good manners to hum—she's forgot 'em—or she wouldn't laugh and make fun of the relation of the folks she's visitin', and right in their *hearin'* too.' That's all, Miss, I just thought I'd speak of it so you mightn't forgit 'em next time; it makes a body feel dreadful shaller to be ketched without 'em."

The consternation of those who listened may be better imagined than described. Fanny changed color every instant, and her sparkling eyes, full

of confusion, sought the face of every listener by turns, as if to learn their approval or disapproval of what was being said. She knew the rebuke was merited, but the idea of that green, awkward, country girl taking her to task, in presence of those whose good opinion she so much coveted, was more than her pride could bear. She could not deny the charge which Mary Ann brought against her, so, not knowing what better to do, she smiled—a very uncomfortable smile—and, making a graceful little courtesy, retired, saying only, "Ladies, and gentlemen, and *Miss Marston in particular*, I wish you a very good evening. I suppose I might say, with great propriety, a very good *morning*."

"Oh, Mary Ann!" cried Minnie as soon as Fannie was out of hearing, "how *could* you do so?"

"Now, Minnie, I'm sorry, if it makes you feel bad, but I couldn't help it. I should a-choked if I hadn't a-said it. I s'pose she thinks a-cause I live in the country I don't know what good manners is, and I thought I'd jest let her know that I've had as good bringin' up as she has, and knowed she wasn't actin' very much like a lady when she came and stood right alongside of me and made fun of my clothes and dancin'. She's purty; there's no gittin' by that, but there's some folks what likes

good manners and a kind heart better'n a purty face, and I'm one of them sort. I'm sorry, Minnie; you'll forgive me, won't you?"

There was so much common sense in what Mary Ann said, and her manner of saying it was so comical, that no one could be angry with her, so they had a good hearty laugh over it, and uncle Marston, who had heard Fannie making some rude remarks with reference to his niece, proposed they should take a parting glass of wine to Mary Ann's health. This done, the last guest departed, and the evening—the events of which we have chronicled—was numbered with the past.

CHAPTER XI.

"THE MORE THE MERRIER;" WHICH DID NOT PROVE TRUE IN THIS CASE.

SEE how the clouds float over the beautiful silver moon! Scarcely had Maude entered upon her first dream when the snow-flakes quietly, one by one, came stealing down from that mysterious upper world, to rest in their incomparable whiteness alike upon palace and hovel. Slowly the few first flakes descended, resting in lonely purity where they fell; then thickening, the storm increased until the air seemed one floating mass of snow. The moon, shrouded in a fleecy veil, seemed as though ploughing her way through dense mountains as she journeyed toward her western home. How like the good and great of earth, when struggling with the storms of human life; oftentimes bedimmed and shrouded by the clouds of care, but always traceable despite the clouds and storm.

Faster and faster fell the snow. Not a breath of

wind came to ruffle the pure white robe that was being spread upon the earth. Every moment the air became colder and more keen, until not even a friendless, houseless beggar was astir; they had crept into sheltered alleys, and friendly doorways, and hugging their tattered rags about them waited, shivering, until the night should pass away, for cold and hunger are fearful enough by daylight, but oh! how doubly terrible, when night with her melancholy garments settles like a pall upon the homeless wanderer. Daylight came at last, and the snow still fell rapidly. The sun was not seen to rise that morning, but we have every reason to believe that he *did* rise, for at twelve o'clock the clouds gradually cleared away, the storm ceased, and he showed his round and dazzling countenance, looking rather pale, however, for the frost and cold were intense, and it took some hours of his genial influence to soften and ameliorate the frigid atmosphere.

Ah, but there were gay hearts in Gotham that day! It was the first sleighing of the season, and by the time the first sunbeam had looked out from among the clouds, the bells were ringing a perfect jubilee. "Now," said Maude Everet, as she looked from the window and saw that the storm was ceasing, and the sun beginning to show himself, "now

for a sleighride. Come, Harry! come, Cevillian! this is the time to redeem your promise. No time to be lost; so, Harry, please tell Pedro to bring the sleigh and horses around as soon as possible. I shall be ready sooner than they;" and without waiting for an answer, she ran off to her own room, singing gaily as she went. What a merry, happy little heart it was, yet what deep, undiscovered fountains it contained, which required only a touch from the magic wand of the great workman—Time—to bring them into full play.

True to her word, she was the first one ready, and very lovely she looked in her bewitching little blue velvet hood with its edging of soft white down, and strings of glossy white satin tied under the chin in the most coquettish of bows. Be-cloaked, and be-furred, she took her stand at the drawing-room window to await the arrival of the sleigh.

"Well, Miss," said her brother, approaching her wrapped in a most luxurious fur coat, "are we three supposed to complete the party, or do you intend inviting some of your lady friends to favor us with their company. What do you say to inviting Miss Mary Ann Marston? She would be capital company for a cold day. Nothing warms one up like a good laugh."

"Thank you," said Maude, "I have my company

already engaged. What do *you* say to calling for 'Elma?"

"Oh, glorious! What a blockhead I am not to have thought of it before. Come, Cevil, you have spent half an hour tying that scarf, and here is Pedro just coming around; so give it the finishing touch and let us be off." And suiting the action to the word he dashed down the steps closely followed by Maude and Cevillian. As the costly robes were being carefully arranged so as to protect the fair young girl against every particle of cold, another— young as she, and scarce less beautiful—approached, and drawing a miserable threadbare apology for a shawl closely around her finely-formed shoulders, held out her small, thin hand for charity. The blue lips moved, yet syllabled no word, but the eye that met Maude's pleaded more eloquently than any spoken language could have done. So young, so beautiful, and a beggar! God help thee! 'Tis sad enough to be poor, but beauty proves too oft a fatal gift when coupled with poverty.

In an instant Maude's hand was searching beneath the furs and cloak for her pocket. She found it at last, and when the sleigh with its luxurious robes and cushions moved away to the music of merry bells, there lay in the hand of the poor beggar girl three shining silver coins. Harry

and Cevillian had added their mite; and three more stars were set in the crown of charity.

She looked in astonishment at the generous gift, and shading her eyes from the sunlight with her thin hands, she stood looking after the beautiful young lady until she was out of sight, murmuring, "God bless thee! Thy face is beautiful as an angel's, but not so lovely as the pity that moved thy innocent young heart to this generous charity." Poor Lucy! she was a beggar now, but she had known better days. 'Twas the old story: her father had yielded to the tempter; her mother, unable to bear the sad change, had gone to an early grave and left her in the world alone, with that sad heritage—poverty and beauty. She had toiled on wearily from day to day, earning bread for her miserable father, until strength and courage failed, and weary and heart-sick she could work no longer. To-day—for the first time—she was a beggar; but she was innocent still. Let us turn away while we can say, "*she was innocent still.*" If a time ever arrived when the heart-broken girl looked back to her days of innocence as among the blessings of her early life which had passed away, and felt the spirit-pinions drooping and earth-soiled, fettered and all unfit to soar to the pure regions where she believed her fond mother dwelt, to whose account

think you the deadly sin will be placed? To hers, who was already working out her sum of wretchedness with suffering and tears, or his who, yielding to a morbid and selfish appetite, had left her, with her beauty and inexperience, a prey to the tempter who knoweth so well the weakness engendered by poverty and sorrow?

While we have been speaking of Lucy, Maude and her companions have reached the residence of Friend Ring, and Harry, having rung the bell, was standing face to face with Judy.

"Is Miss Sands at home?" he inquired.

"Yes sah!" replied Judy, dropping one of her most graceful courtesies; "Miss Almy, she be to home, and Miss Hope too. I spect it's Miss Almy young massa want to see. Please walk in de parlor an' I'll tell Miss Almy you be waiting fur her."

Maude and Cevillian now alighted, and the three entered the drawing-room together. Judy remembered the fine black horses, and upon entering the room where Hope and 'Elma were sitting, she exclaimed, quite out of breath,—

"Miss Almy, you know de two brack hosses what took you to de party tudder night, and come home wid you next day?"

"Yes," said 'Elma, looking up in some surprise at

the unusual style of this speech; "yes, Judy, I remember; what of them?"

"Well, dey waitin' in de parlor for you now. Dere's free of 'em, and dey sed dey want to see Miss Almy."

"What, the horses, Judy?" said Hope, laughing till the tears ran down her cheeks.

"De berry same brack hosses, I *know*, 'cause de nigga driber stan' holden' em by de head, and I 'member *him*."

"But you said they were waiting in the parlor," persisted the mischievous girl, "and had asked for 'Elma."

"No, 'twasn't de hosses; 'twas de young man dat 'quired for her, and I axed him to bring de sleigh in de parlor—no, I don't mean dat—I axed him to walk in de parlor, an he's dar now, waitin' for 'er." Having delivered the message to her entire satisfaction, she retired, saying by way of soliloquy as she journeyed toward the kitchen, "Miss Hope look at a body wid dem sharp, little, brack eyes ob hern 'till dey can't tell if dere speakin' de trufe or not."

'Elma ran down to the parlor without delay, feeling almost sure that Maude had come to ask her to make one of the sleighing party; and she was not disappointed, for the first word after they had ex-

changed greetings was a command to make ready as soon as possible and come out for a sleigh-ride.

"Your cousin promised mamma you should go," said Maude, "so we are all right in *that* direction; and now, Daisy, put on your cloak and hood, and we will be off directly."

She did not need twice bidding, but with a light step and happy heart, ran to ask Cousin Catharine's permission before she set about making herself comfortable for the occasion. In less time than it has taken us to tell it she was ready, and with her beautiful eyes sparkling with pleasure, and her snug little white silk hood tied with a broad blue ribbon, she joined her friends, and they were soon snugly tucked up in the great fur robes that bid defiance to the cold, and the sleigh was gliding swiftly over the frozen snow. Never had 'Elma felt so happy before. There is a strange species of exhilaration in rapid motion, and as the spirited horses dashed along, making merry music as they went, the tongues of the little party kept lively time to the jingling bells. In a few moments they were outside the town, skimming over the pure white road at a pace that stirred the envy of those whom they left behind, and they were not a few.

There was no Central Park then, with its skating pond and well kept roads, but once outside the city

the country in all its natural beauty of woods and fields lay outspread before the eye.

"Look, Maude," said 'Elma, as a tasty little cutter drawn by a dashing bay pony came toward them, "is not that Mr. Stetson?"

"Yes, and Frank Thurston," said Harry. "By Jove what a spinner that little pony is." As he spoke the pony dashed past them; not, however, until the parties had been recognized, and bows and smiles exchanged.

"I say, Phil, you don't dare turn about and keep in company with those bright eyes behind the blacks?" said Mr. Thurston.

"Why not?" said Philip; "I've half a mind to do it."

"Make it a *whole* mind, Phil, and do the thing at once;" and laying his hand on his friend's arm the point was settled, and in a moment the bay pony was rapidly retracing his steps.

"Who is the young lady beside Miss Everet?" asked Mr. Thurston. "I was so intent upon having you turn back that I did not take time to ask if you knew her."

"It is her friend, Miss Sands," was the reply.

"She of whom Miss Bruce was speaking last evening?" questioned Mr. Thurston.

"The same" said Philip. "I thought you had seen her before."

"No, I was not at Miss Everet's party; unfortunately I was out of town at that time. I have heard her spoken of very frequently since that evening, and have wished very much to meet her. If the glimpse I had of her face has given me a correct idea, she is worthy of all the admiration I have heard bestowed upon her."

"'Elma is a true child of nature," Philip replied. "She charms, because she makes no effort to do so. I am very sorry Fan has taken it into her head to dislike her."

As this last remark was made the bay pony came up directly behind the blacks, and Harry and Cevillian, who were riding with their backs to the horses in order to face the ladies, saw that the two young gentlemen had turned back for the purpose of keeping them company. Harry remarked this to Maude and 'Elma, who wished very much to turn around and have a look to make sure he was not playing a joke upon them; but Cevillian assured them it was really so, and had they been disposed they could doubt no longer, for as the horses slackened their pace in ascending a little hill, the bay pony came up directly beside them,

and Philip, raising his hand to his fur sleighing cap, said,—

"Pardon us, ladies, for having the impudence to follow you, but really the temptation was not to be resisted. Will you allow us to join you? We shall be content to follow if you will lead."

"The more the merrier," replied Maude, "and I think that old saying applies particularly to sleigh-riding."

"What a spicy little nag you have there Phil," said Harry. "I quite envy you as you handle the ribbons."

"Not so much as I envy you at this moment, I do assure you," he replied and as he spoke a sleigh and pair of fiery greys came up beside them and slowly passed them by.

"Ah! good-morning, uncle," said Philip, as he recognized Mr. Bruce; "good-morning ladies," and his hand went up to his cap again as he bowed to Fannie and her mother.

The whole party were now recognized and bows exchanged as the greys passed on. Fannie said nothing, but when she saw Philip and Mr. Thurston in company with Maude and 'Elma she doubted not it was an arranged plan, and supposed they had left the city together. She caught a glimpse of 'Elma's face, and to see her looking so

beautiful, so satisfied and happy, was more than she could bear, and although she had been very anxious to go out, the drive to her was cold and comfortless, and she sat buried in a mass of furs, with a thick veil covering her face to hide the tears she could not keep from springing to her eyes.

The bay pony refused to fall behind again, having once come alongside, and the parties pursued their way in the most social and friendly manner possible. It was before the day of "Burnham's" or "The Abbey;" before there was a house of entertainment kept in that cosy little nook called "Striker's Bay;" yes, it was even before the reign of *Cato*, whose shining ebon face and willing hands welcomed the coming, and sped the going guest, and dispensed mulled wine and spiced rum to the chilled and shivering traveller in such perfection as never has been known since he "shuffled off this mortal coil," and went to mingle with *spirits* that never lead astray. There were but few houses of entertainment in the suburbs of New York in the days of which we write, and they were vastly inferior in style to those of the present day. There was one that enjoyed the reputation of a first-class house, situated near what is now called High Bridge, and in front of this dwelling the dashing greys

drew up and deposited their aristocratic load. Close behind them came the parties who had so stirred Fannie's heart to dissatisfaction. They alighted and entered the parlor where she and her mother were enjoying the warmth of a great wood fire, made in a fireplace that reached half across the room. Maude and Fannie shook hands warmly, and 'Elma, with her heart full of kindness, offered *her* hand, which Fannie only touched in the coldest manner possible. 'Elma felt that it was intended for a slight, and when Maude introduced her to Mrs. Bruce, that grand lady looked at her in such a cold and scrutinizing manner, and seemed so uncertain about offering her hand, that 'Elma only bowed, and the natural dignity and self-possession of her manner—which always speaks of gentle blood—quite took the lady by surprise, and taking her eyeglass from her belt she deliberately scrutinized her as she sat on the opposite side of the great fireplace, and quietly took off her gloves, and held her chilled fingers within the influence of the glowing coals. Having satisfied her curiosity, she replaced her glass just as the gentlemen of the party entered the room. While Frank Thurston and Harry were exchanging compliments with Mr. and Mrs. Bruce, Philip introduced his uncle to 'Elma. Maude and he had met before, and they now shook hands in the most cor-

dial manner. His manner to 'Elma was much more friendly than had been that of his fine lady, and taking a seat beside her, he began asking her some questions with reference to the drive, and made some commonplace remarks, to all of which she replied in such a pleasant and unaffected manner that he gradually fell into conversation with her, and had just discovered that she was a remarkably sensible little girl, when he accidentally glanced across the room and encountered his wife's eye resting upon him with an expression of evident dissatisfaction. It was a look with which he was well acquainted,—a look he had known and dreaded for years. He did not know why she should wear it now; she certainly could not be jealous of the little girl to whom he was speaking for the first time. He rose, however, fully convinced that he was doing something wrong, and exchanged his seat for one close beside her. No sooner had he done so, than Frank Thurston appropriated the vacant chair beside 'Elma, and continued his attentions during the remainder of their stay.

Having refreshed themselves with cakes and coffee, and enjoyed to their entire satisfaction the blazing fire, they prepared for the homeward drive. If Fannie was vexed before, she was *exasperated* when Mr. Thurston, after helping to arrange the


robes so as to protect her from every particle of cold, made her a very elegant bow, and bidding her good-afternoon, took his seat in the sleigh beside Philip and joined the company of Maude and 'Elma. The bay pony seemed to like the company of the glossy blacks, for he kept close beside them all the way. Merrily rang the bells, but Fannie's heart kept no time to their music. Silent and dissatisfied, she felt no exhilaration from the pure, bracing atmosphere, and only longed to be at home where she could sit down and vent her anger and jealousy in a flood of tears. Maude and 'Elma were as happy as Fannie was miserable, and little thought, as they chatted so gaily, how bitter were the feelings of her heart against them.

The brief winter day was just closing as the party drew up at Friend Ring's door, and the great round moon was casting her first pale ray over the snow-clad city when 'Elma bade her friends farewell.

Oh, happy days of guileless youth, how smoothly are ye gliding away! All is joy and sunlight, and if there be in the dim future dark clouds of care and trial for the friends who have just parted, no shadow from their unwelcome gloom has as yet fallen upon the path which they are treading now!

CHAPTER XII.

THE LITTLE PEACEMAKER.

HRISTMAS week has passed, the holidays are at an end, and Monday morning finds our young friends of Miss Willson's establishment each in her accustomed place at an early hour. Fannie Bruce, contrary to her usual custom, was the first one in the schoolroom, and when Maude arrived, and in a few minutes after her; 'Elma and Hope, the three exchanged glances at seeing Fannie, who was generally the last to make her appearance, already there, *apparently* quite busy with her books.

There was the usual amount of confusion attendant upon the reassembling of a large school, but in course of time all became quiet, and the most restless little fidgeter composed herself and assumed an attitude of attention, as Miss Willson took her seat and prepared to read to them, as was her usual custom, a portion of the Holy Scriptures, before commencing the exercises of the day. The selection

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was from Matthew, the fifth chapter—Christ's sermon on the Mount. Miss Willson had a fine voice, and read with much expression the beautiful words of beatitude that pronounced a blessing upon the meek, the pure in heart, and the peacemaker. Having concluded this first duty of the morning, the usual lessons were said, and the first hour of study past; then came intermission. Miss Willson left the schoolroom for half an hour, and the pupils were at liberty to exercise in the gymnasium or halls. The school-room was soon deserted by all but 'Elma. She was not quite satisfied that she knew her French lesson perfectly, and as it was the first in order after intermission, she remained at her desk to study it over just once more before Professor Vilplaît should make his appearance.

At the termination of the half hour, the jingle of the shrill little bell brought the wanderers back to their seats and lessons, and 'Elma felt quite confident of her ability to acquit herself creditably when the French class should be called. Professor Vilplaît, punctual as the sun, appeared at the appointed moment, and summoned the class before him. All stepped forward, and, placing upon the table around which they sat during the lesson, books, pens, and inkstands, took their seats in order; all but Fannie Bruce, who lingered, searching in her desk for

something she could not find. The professor cast a glance of impatience upon her and said sharply,—

"Mademoiselle Bruce, you come not ven I call."

"Pardon me, professor," said Fannie; "I was looking for my pen and ink. They were here this morning, but I cannot find them now; some one has taken them away."

"I think you are mistaken," said Miss Willson; "the young ladies here are all aware that it is against the rules for any one to open another's desk, much less to remove any article belonging there. Are you sure your pen and ink were in their place this morning?"

"Quite sure," replied Fannie, with a very positive air. "I am *sure*, because I used my pen to write my name in this new translation book, the first thing when I came into the school-room."

"We cannot detain the class to look into this matter now," said Miss Willson; "you may use your pencil for this time."

Fannie took her seat at the table, looking more amiable than we would expect, for her temper was very easily ruffled, even by circumstances as trivial as the misplacing of her pen and ink. The French lesson went on satisfactorily until near the end, when the professor gave some correction to the pronunciation of a sentence which the class could never

quite get to suit him. He repeated it several times, but whenever they tried to imitate him, there was always the old difficulty. Fannie, who was neither a very patient nor persevering scholar, became very tired of making the unsuccessful effort, and turning to him, said,—

"We cannot say it just like you, sir, because you are a Frenchman."

"*Oui, mademoiselle*, you *can* say like me. One of zese young ladies speak it right; ze pronunciation is quite perfect. Mademoiselle Sands, you speak zis sentence for Mademoiselle Bruce—*you* have not French tongue."

'Elma's face was crimson in an instant; she hesitated, for both teachers and pupils were looking at her, and she felt as though it would be impossible for her to repeat the required words.

"*S'il vous plaît, mademoiselle*," said the professor, kindly.

His words reassured her, and without further hesitation she raised her eyes to Fannie's face and repeated the sentence he directed. "'Tis vell, 'tis vell," said he; "you zee, mademoiselle, 'tis not ze French tongue. To-morrow *you* will say it right; if you forget, Mademoiselle Sands will tell you once more. I sall leave you for ze present; to-morrow ve sall try again."

"*She* teach me to speak French, indeed!" indignantly muttered Fannie, as she took her seat; "they are making a fool of that girl. I should like to see myself asking her how to pronounce. She will be more vain than *ever* now."

Maude saw the storm that was raging in Fannie's bosom, but made no demonstration of her knowledge. She had sat perfectly breathless when the professor called upon 'Elma to correct the class, and when she heard her speak the difficult sentence as perfectly as he himself could do, it was with difficulty she restrained herself from clapping her hands and giving "three cheers for Daisy."

Immediately after French an hour was devoted to writing, and the matter of the missing pen and ink must be settled.

"Young ladies," said Miss Willson, in a very professional voice, "have you, any of you any knowledge of the articles that are missing from Miss Bruce's desk?"

A universal murmur in the negative followed this question.

"I should be very sorry to suspect any of you of telling an untruth," she continued, "but as the things are not in their place, and Miss Fannie is quite sure they were there this morning, I shall take the liberty of examining all the desks, beginning with

her own, to be sure that she has not overlooked them," and leaning over Fannie she looked in vain for the missing articles.

"Not there," she said, proceeding to the next, and the next, unsuccessfully, until the first class had all been examined. The examination of the second class threw no further light upon the subject. Then came the third. 'Elma was at the head of her class and her desk was the first one opened. It was filled with books and papers, which she began removing when Miss Willson raised the lid. Every one was taken out and the desk was quite empty. It was deep, and the lid opened only half way, so that when it was up one-half the desk still remained covered—consequently, the back part was quite dark. Miss Willson put in her hand, to be sure nothing had escaped her notice, and to the astonishment of all—particularly 'Elma—she brought forth the missing articles.

The inkstand was a valuable one, and had been a present to Fannie, and the pen had a silver holder, so that they were of more consequence than an ordinary pen and inkstand.

Poor 'Elma! the first move she made was to look Miss Willson full in the face and ask, with an expression of conscious innocence,—

"How came they there?"

"You can best answer that question yourself, miss," returned the indignant lady. "Did I not distinctly hear you deny any knowledge of these things?"

"Thee did, and I repeat it now. I had no knowledge of them until this instant."

"Do not add falsehood to your fault, miss. I did not expect to find them here. I can assure you, it gives me great sorrow to find that one I had thought so truthful and ingenuous should be capable of such duplicity. You may take your books and go to the vacant class-room for the present. When you have made up your mind to confess your fault, and ask pardon of Miss Bruce, you may return and do it in the presence of the school."

"I will never confess the fault that I have not committed, madam," returned 'Elma with dignity; "neither shall I ask pardon of *any person* to whom I have never given offence."

"Do as you are bidden, and at once, or be expelled for not obeying orders."

'Elma was too indignant to shed tears, though her heart was fit to break. She did not take up her books at once, and it passed through her mind that she would take them and go home, and never come to school again. As she was making up her mind to this she looked at Maude, and there was some-

thing in the expression of her friend's face that decided her to do as she had been bidden; quietly taking up her books she walked with a steady step the entire length of the school-room, and bore without the slightest confusion the curious scrutiny of the glances cast upon her. When she had left the room Miss Willson asked,—

"How could she have taken those things without being seen?"

"She did not come out at intermission," said Fannie, "but remained at her desk studying the French lesson. No wonder she knew it so well. She was quite alone in the school-room for half an hour."

"That will do," said Miss Willson; "now we will proceed with the writing."

The girls could with difficulty keep their eyes on their books, for they were every moment expecting to see 'Elma return to confess her fault and ask Fannie's pardon—all but Maude. She felt sure there was some mystery in the matter, and was convinced that 'Elma had spoken the truth. Oh, how she longed to go and tell her so; but that could not be, and she waited impatiently the result. The hour for dismissing school arrived, yet 'Elma came not. When Miss Willson said, "We will close our exercises for the day," Minnie Marston slipped a

scrap of paper into Maude's book, containing these words: "Do you think she will come?" To which Maude replied in large letters, "*Never!*" To which Minnie responded, with an extra dash, "*Good!!*"

Hope had been a silent observer of all that was taking place, and her black eyes were flashing forth the angry feelings she could not control. The school was dismissed, and with her hood and cloak on, and her books in her hand, she took her seat in the hall to wait for 'Elma.

"You may as well go, Hope," said Miss Willson, as she passed her on the way to the class-room, where 'Elma was waiting; "your cousin may be detained for some time yet."

"My sister does not like me to go alone," replied the angry girl, fully determined to wait for her cousin, if she were kept until the next morning; "and she always tells me to wait for 'Elma."

"Such being your orders, you may wait," said the dignified lady, disappearing through the doorway of the class-room. Maude had not dared go to her friend when school was dismissed, as she had wished to do, and her impatience was almost beyond control. When Miss Willson entered the room, 'Elma sat quietly studying her lesson—or seeming to do so. Her eyes were bent upon her book, and she seemed quite composed. She closed

the book when Miss Willson entered, and turned toward her as though expecting to receive her final sentence.

"'Elma," said that lady, "I am much grieved at what has taken place to-day. There is a rule in this establishment to this effect: '*If any person here be found guilty of dishonesty and falsehood, and refuse to confess their fault and promise amendment for the future, they must be at once expelled as improper associates for the young ladies under my care.*' You have been guilty of both these errors, and refuse to expiate your crime by confession. This being the case, there remains but one alternative. Even now, if you will confess to me your fault and promise to strive against temptation in the future, all shall be forgiven. Fannie is ready to forgive you, if you will ask her to do so. Will you not try?"

"No; I am neither guilty of dishonesty nor falsehood. I cannot explain the mystery that has placed me in this position; I only know that I am innocent."

"Why did you remain in the school-room during intermission to-day? You do not usually do so."

"I wished to spend that half-hour in looking over my French lesson."

"I am sorry to say it looks very suspicious, and,

if you cannot make up your mind by to-morrow morning to confess your fault, I shall be under the necessity of expelling you. You may go now, and I hope that when you reflect upon the subject, your better judgment will prevail, and you will make up your mind to comply with the terms required."

"That I shall *never* do," replied 'Elma proudly. "I have faults enough to mourn over without confessing those of which I am not guilty. I repeat once more, of the crimes with which you charge me *I am innocent*. Good-afternoon, madam." She opened the door and stepped into the hall where Hope was sitting. Miss Willson followed her, and was surprised to find one of the youngest of her pupils—a little girl of about eight years of age—standing close beside the door, evidently waiting to meet her. "Well, Mamie, what are you doing here?" she asked. "I thought you had gone long ago."

"No, ma'am," said the child, "I wanted to see you, and I told Betsy to wait for me."

"And what did you want to see me for, Mamie?" Miss Willson asked.

"Well, ma'am," said the child, biting the corner of her apron, "you read this morning about the pure in heart, and the peacemaker, and all those things." She hesitated as though she expected

some encouragement to go on, and Miss Willson said, "Yes, Mamie, and I am very glad to see that you remember it so well; what have you to say about it?"

"Well, if I could tell how the pen and ink came to be in Miss Sands's desk, would I be a peacemaker?"

"Well, yes," replied Miss Willson, "and if you know, it would be very wicked of you not to tell. Do you know anything about it, Mamie?"

"Yes'm; I saw Miss Bruce put them there just as I went in the school-room. She was there all alone, and I saw her put them in; but I didn't think anything about it till I heard you scold Miss Sands for having them there, and then I was afraid to speak because you were angry, so I thought I would come and tell you now."

'Elma's hand was upon the latch, but Miss Willson did not allow her to turn it. "Stay," she said; "this throws some light upon the subject. Mamie, are you quite sure of what you tell me, and will you repeat it if I send for Fannie?"

"Yes'm; and I'll say it before all the girls. I didn't like to speak this morn'ing, because I didn't know just what it meant, but I heard some of the girls saying what a pity it was that such a pretty girl as Miss Sands should be a thief, and then I

knew that you thought she stole Miss Fannie's inkstand, and I remembered what you read this morning, and I felt so sorry I didn't tell you all about it that I couldn't go away till I told you."

"Elma," said Miss Willson, "I will send for Fanny and see what she says to Mamie's accusation," and ringing the bell she sent a messenger to say she required Miss Bruce's presence in the class-room. In a few moments Miss Fannie made her appearance, and was not a little surprised to find 'Elma, Hope, and Mamie, as well as Miss Willson, awaiting her. She was evidently confused in spite of her efforts to appear composed.

"Did you send for me?" she said, striving to assume an air of indifference.

"I did," Miss Willson replied. "There has been some trouble in the school to-day, and I wish, if possible, to have it explained at once, so that the blame may rest where it belongs. Circumstances have been very much against 'Elma, and I have dealt with her as though she were the guilty party—honestly believing her to be so; but Mamie has just told me that which leads me to think I may have been mistaken."

She fixed her eyes on Fannie with an expression that said she was not to be deceived, and said,—

"Mamie, who was in the school-room when you came this morning?"

"Miss Bruce, ma'am," said the child.

"What was she doing when you went into the room?"

"She was standing by Miss Sands's desk with an inkstand in her hand, and there was a pen on the inkstand."

"What did she do when she saw you?" continued Miss Willson.

"She put the things in Miss 'Elma's desk, and shut the lid *quick* and went away."

"Oh, you little liar!" said Fannie, turning toward the child, her face crimson with confusion and guilt, "I did no such thing."

"Yes, you did, Miss Fannie, and you went away from the desk so quick that you caught the fringe of your apron in the back of Miss 'Elma's chair, and the threads are there now, for I saw them when I came out of school. I'll go get them and show them to you."

"No, Mamie," said Miss Willson, as the child in her earnestness darted off toward the school-room, "we will go and see for ourselves, and if we find it as you say I shall think you have told me all the truth." 'Elma did not wish to go with them, but

Hope pulled her toward the door, and Miss Willson, seeing that she hesitated, bade her come with them and see if Mamie was correct. They entered the school-room, and the child, impatient to prove the truth of her assertion, darted forward and brought the chair that 'Elma had occupied half across the room, and putting it down in front of Miss Willson, pointed out the bits of silk that were fastened in the back. Fannie had been so startled when the door opened and she thought she was going to be discovered at her mischief, that she did not notice that she had left her mark. Miss Willson looked at Fannie, who, covered with confusion, could not raise her eyes; and little Mamie, venturing to take Miss Willson's hand, said, —

"Didn't I tell the truth, and am I a peacemaker?"

"Yes, my child," her teacher replied, "I believe you have spoken the truth; and much as I regret to find Miss Bruce guilty of such unprincipled conduct, I am glad the facts that have just been revealed have fixed the guilt upon the proper person. 'Elma has suffered much to-day from Fannie's fault, and I felt convinced—very unwillingly—that she was guilty of falsehood and dishonesty. I am happy, my dear girl," said she, turning kindly to

'Elma and taking her hand as she spoke, "to find I may return to my original opinion of you. The occurrences of to-day have raised, instead of lowering you in my estimation; for when most bitterly accused you displayed no unbecoming temper, and asserted your own innocence without an effort to involve another in the difficulty. To *you*, Fannie, I scarce know what to say. 'Elma was *accused* before the whole school, in presence of the school she must be *justified*; this involves your exposure and disgrace. You know the penalty of your conduct; will you confess, and ask pardon?"

Fannie was proud, but she was a coward; she thought if Miss Willson would let her make her confession then and there, she could do it, but not before the school. It would be very humiliating for her to ask pardon of 'Elma, but not so much so as to be expelled for such mean conduct.

"I will do as you wish, madam, if it may be done here," said she without raising her eyes from the floor.

"That will not do," said Miss Willson; "it must be done in presence of the school."

"I *cannot*!" said Fannie, bursting into tears,—more of anger than of sorrow,—"*I cannot* do that."

"Pardon me for interrupting thee," said 'Elma;

"but if it is of *me* thee would have Fannie ask pardon, it is quite unnecessary she should do so. I have forgiven her already. With her *confession* I have nothing to do; and if thee will excuse me I will go now, for I had rather not hear it."

Fannie looked at 'Elma now for the first time since they had entered the room. She could not conceive of such a generous action. She had thought 'Elma would exult over her, but when she heard her kind and magnanimous words she felt as though crushed to earth by the weight of her own inferiority. She was incapable of appreciating the conduct of the noble-hearted girl before her, and she hated her just in proportion as she made her feel her own insignificance. 'Elma left them together—Miss Willson and Fannie. Their interview was long and painful. Miss Willson was peremptory, and Fannie was proud and stubborn. She must confess her fault in presence of the school or be expelled and have a full account of her dishonorable conduct sent to her parents. Miss Willson had great influence with her because she never indulged or tolerated her whims, but always insisted upon implicit obedience. Fannie both feared and respected her, for in her she recognized a superior, and the only way by which to obtain her respect

was to show a force of power and will superior to her own. She went to her room when Miss Willson dismissed her, and during the evening maintained the most rigid silence. She was deciding upon her conduct for the morrow. Poor, proud Fannie!

CHAPTER XIII.

SHADOWS.

THE morrow came; school was assembled 'Elma and Fannie were there—the one composed and self-possessed as usual: the other excited and restless, scarcely knowing what she said or did. Miss Willson opened the Holy Book and read the twentieth chapter of Exodus. When she came to the words "Thou shalt not steal," she read slowly and impressively; then followed that other commandment,—"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." She paused, without raising her eyes, but every one present felt that she wished to give more than ordinary expression to the words. When she had finished reading she closed the book, and folding her hands she rose and stood for a moment looking upon 'Elma. Every one expected to see her rise and confess her fault, or failing to do so, be expelled for disobedience. Maude trembled: she believed 'Elma innocent, but could not prove her so. 'Elma raised her eyes to

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those of her teacher with an expression of confidence, and received a glance of kindness in return.

"Young ladies," said Miss Willson, "there was a deception practised here yesterday which led me to believe one of your number guilty of dishonesty and falsehood. Since we parted I have come into possession of the facts of the case. 'Elma is innocent of the charges brought against her; but I regret to say another is more guilty than I yesterday believed *her* to be. Those articles were placed in 'Elma's desk from no pure or honorable motive. If the young lady who put them there is present let her rise and confess her fault." Fannie did not move at once but sat with her eyes cast down, and a blush of shame upon her cheek. Then Miss Willson repeated the command, "If the young lady who put them there is present let her rise and confess her fault."

Slowly and unwillingly the guilty girl arose, and without raising her eyes, said in a dry and husky voice, "*It was I;*" then, sinking into her seat, she tossed her head as though she would have said, "It is over now, and I'll hate her just as much as I please."

Miss Willson looked at 'Elma to see what would be her manner when Fannie spoke. She sat with her elbow on her desk, and her head resting on her

hand which shaded her eyes, as though she did not wish to witness the embarrassment of her who had so injured her—in intention. "It would be right," said Miss Willson, "for Miss Bruce to ask pardon of Miss Sands for the injuries she has done her, but that young lady most magnanimously declares it is unnecessary, for she has forgiven her already, and wishes the whole transaction to be forgotten. Now that this matter is settled, we will proceed with the exercises of the day."

Oh, what an exultant glance Maude and Minnie Marston exchanged when Miss Willson said "'Elma is innocent," and what a look of surprise when the haughty and overbearing Fannie rose in answer to Miss Willson's question and said, "It was I." Fannie did not seem inclined to speak to any one, but applied herself to her books with a most unusual earnestness. The morning passed away without Maude being able to speak a word to 'Elma, but when Professor Vilplait summoned his class around the table she took her hand and said, "Oh, Daisy, I am so happy! I shall tell them all about it at home, and they will be so proud of you." 'Elma smiled, but she was too happy to speak,—even had she been at liberty to do so, which she was *not* at present. Fannie saw the expression of 'Elma's face, and her eyes flashed as she took her seat at

the opposite side of the table. "I'll manage it better next time," thought she. "Practice makes perfect." The lessons went on satisfactorily, and the day passed by without any occurrence worthy of note. Contrary to Fannie's expectation, when school was dismissed not a girl referred to the exciting transactions of the morning, and she, thinking silence the best policy, maintained the most rigid reticence upon the subject.

Time passed on quietly and unexcitedly to the little circle of which we write. Fannie Bruce never allowed an opportunity to pass when she could in any way annoy 'Elma or place her in an unfavorable light; but her unamiable efforts generally recoiled upon her own head, and she was always foiled and disarmed just when her plans promised the greatest success. The bond of affection between Maude and 'Elma strengthened as the excellence of each was day by day developed and impressed upon the heart of the other. 'Elma was soon promoted to the second class, and the day after her promotion a case, containing a very beautiful little watch and chain, was presented to her by Mr. Everet, accompanied by a kind letter of congratulation, begging her acceptance of the gift as an assurance of his appreciation of her efforts in the road to knowledge. Days, and weeks, and

months passed by, and 'Elma was so happy that she wished her life could all be school-days. But a change came by-and-by, and when the snow was gone, and spring came smiling in the sunshine of bright April days, the sunlight of 'Elma's heart was suddenly darkened by one of those dense clouds of fate that sometimes burst upon us, making us feel that for us there is no more joy—only tears and grief.

About the first of April, on a bright sunshiny day, a letter was left by the postman for "Miss 'Elma Sands." With eager joy she stretched forth her hand to receive it—she was expecting one from her mother that day. But why did she pause to look so intently at the address? The writing was unfamiliar, and in place of the usual red wafer it bore a heavy black seal. Pale and trembling she handed it to Cousin Catharine, saying: "I dare not open it; thee must read it first." She broke the seal and read it through to herself. 'Elma, with clasped hands, and face like marble in its cold, colorless expression of endurance, knelt at her cousin's side and gathered from her changing color and moistened eyes that the first blighting sorrow was about to fall upon her young life. She did not speak, but her eyes rested with such scrutinizing glance upon the reader's face that she gathered the full sum of

all her grief before she had heard one word of what the letter contained. When Cousin Catharine had finished reading, she passed her arm fondly around the young girl and drew her head tenderly down upon her bosom, and dropping the letter upon her lap she smoothed the glossy curls that fell around the pale young face, and imprinted a kiss upon the white forehead, upturned in painful, anxious expression, and looked sorrowfully into the dark eyes that looked so sorrowfully into hers.

"'Elma," she said, "thee believes thee has a Father in Heaven?" A sudden start and an assenting inclination of the head was the only reply; she could not speak.

"Thee knows he says, 'When thy Father and Mother forsake thee, I will take thee up.'"

"Oh, what of my parents!" 'Elma exclaimed; "surely they would not forsake me."

"Thou hast no longer a Father on earth, darling; he has gone before, and in good time *we* shall follow." Before the last words were uttered, the poor heart-stricken young creature had slipped away from her cousin's embracing arm, and lay fainting and insensible upon the carpet. Whilst Cousin Catharine is bathing her cold hands, and using such restoratives as the case requires, we will take the liberty of looking into the letter which she has

dropped upon the carpet. It was from a neighbor and old friend of 'Elma's at Cornwall, and read thus:

"CORNWALL, April 1, 1797.

"DEAR 'ELMA:

"I scarcely know how to begin writing you, knowing what sorrow my letter must carry into your happy home. Your father was taken very ill a week ago with a malignant fever of some kind—we hardly know what—and although the doctor attended constantly, and he had the best of attention from friends and neighbors, he grew gradually worse until the seventh day, and this morning at daylight he passed away. His mind wandered constantly from the time he was taken ill until an hour before he breathed his last, when he seemed perfectly rational. He knew his situation, and was resigned and happy. His last words were these: 'Give my parting blessing to my darling child, and tell her she must not leave her mother, now that she will be alone; she must stay with her and they must comfort each other!' He never spoke after saying this, and in a few moments fell asleep in the arms of his Saviour, quietly, and without a struggle. Your mother is worn out with watching and anxiety, and is, I fear, very ill. She wishes

you to come home immediately. She would not have you sent for before, fearing you might take the fever; but now I think she needs your attention, and I am sure you will come as soon as possible. You cannot be here in time for the funeral, for the doctor says it must take place early to-morrow morning, as the disease is contagious, and it would not be safe to keep him any longer.

"With heart-felt sympathy in your affliction, I am, dear 'Elma,

"Your affectionate friend,

"BESSIE BROWN."

'Elma lay for an hour perfectly insensible, pale and cold as marble. Her breath came so lightly that at times it seemed to have ceased entirely, and it was only by the faint fluttering of her heart that they were assured she still lived. Dr. Arnold was sent for, and when he took the cold hand in his, and felt the delicate, pulseless wrist, he shook his head apprehensively, and asked what great shock had reduced her to this seemingly lifeless state. "We have just had information of the sudden death of her father," replied Cousin Catharine, "and she fainted the instant she was told of it." "Poor girl, poor girl," murmured the kind-hearted old doctor as he prepared some drops in a

glass of water; "her first deep grief, I suppose. The young bear these things very badly." And as he spoke he lifted her head gently and poured a spoonful of the restorative between her colorless lips. It was very powerful, and in a few moments she sighed heavily, and although she did not open her eyes tears stole from beneath the dark lashes and followed each other in quick succession down her cheeks.

"Blessed tears!" said the old man, as he again felt her pulse, "the danger is over now; the safety valve is opened, and the poor heart will not break *this* time." He lifted her tenderly in his arms and laid her upon the sofa. His face was very full of compassion, and his eyes were brimming with tears though they did not run over. He was thinking of his own darling Louise, whom he had lifted in that same helpless state when the death-angel entered his dwelling and claimed her tender mother for his own, prostrating by that dreadful blow the young life so all unused to sorrow. He left some drops to be administered every hour, and promising to call again in the evening took his departure, to enter upon other scenes of suffering and sorrow.

'Elma lay for a long time without speaking or opening her eyes, but tears flowed freely, and sobs sometimes shook the delicate frame until it

seemed all too narrow to contain the poor aching heart now so swollen and big with grief. The shutters were darkened, and Cousin Catharine sat by her side, holding her hand, and softly bathing her forehead; but she never spoke to her, for she knew that grief would have its way, and she felt that darkness and silence were the most appropriate accompaniments for sorrow such as hers. Some there are who mourn aloud, showing to all around their agony by multiplicity of words and unavailing groans, calling up vivid pictures of the departed, and dwelling fondly upon farewell words uttered when the death dew was gathering thickly on the ashen brow—to *these* the daylight and wordy, condoling friends. Others, like 'Elma, are prostrated and paralyzed by grief into the utter helplessness of infancy: no word of sympathy can reach their sorrow. Stricken, and blighted, they settle into apathy so deep that the world may deem them cold—their sorrow is too holy for outer life, a something with which the world has naught to do. They speak in whispers, as if fearful of ruffling the tide of memory that flows forever through the heart—but never ebbs.

'Tis the fulness of anguish that turns them to steel,
Then say not, *oh say not* that such do not feel.

To *these* the twilight, and unbroken silence.

When the grey evening had gathered round our mourners in the quiet drawing-room, and the stars were twinkling in their accustomed places as though there was no such thing as sorrow in all the world, Hope Sands and Levi Weeks came in noiselessly, and while Hope knelt lovingly at her cousin's side and kissed the pale cheek that looked so ghastly in the moonlight, Levi seated himself near the window and sat looking out into the busy street below. He had taken his position just in the flood of moonlight that forced its way through the closed shutters and bathed the sofa upon which 'Elma lay in a flood of quivering, silver light. As he did so a dark shadow, occasioned by the interruption, fell upon the sofa, and the three figures that a moment before were wrapped caressingly in the moonbeams were now swallowed up in darkness. Alas, how often do the shadows fall upon our path of life by just such means as this—*some one steps between us and the sunshine of our heart.*

As yet we have said nothing of Levi, further than that he had become a member of Friend Ring's family. While he is sitting there in the quiet

of that house of mourning we will speak of him. He was tall, and well formed—what the world would call fine looking. His hair was dark and long, worn, in the fashion of his day, tied in a cue. A casual observer would have said that his eyes were black, the lashes were so long and dark, but a second glance showed them to be blue. Dark, cerulean eyes they were, lustrous, and large, and beautiful, save for a restlessness of expression, that to a good physiognomist argued instability of character. His was a very contradictory face, for while the eyes, at times, gave tokens of a mind vacillating and unstable, the mouth, that most expressive of all features, had about it certain lines of firmness never to be mistaken. The lips were rather thin, and delicately formed as a woman's, but when in repose, there was decision in every line. Sometimes it might have been called almost a cruel expression, but when the lips parted with a smile, displaying a set of faultless teeth, there was no longer any expression of harshness, or cruelty, or anything but winning frankness and genial light, that made one feel they had been unjust in thinking him stern or cold. His voice was low and flexible, deep-toned and winning—a voice that made very common-place words linger on the ear pleas-

antly. It was as though two distinct characters were striving for the mastery. Which shall win?

Hope had told him of their grief before he entered the room, and he had spoken such kind and considerate words of sympathy, and asked with so much feeling about 'Elma that she felt he would be welcomed as a sympathizer in their sorrow. Wholly absorbed in business, he spent but little time at home, so that no great intimacy had arisen beyond the daily exchange of the ordinary civilities of the home circle. He was young,—perhaps twenty-five,—and was engaged in business with an elder brother, whose name is still remembered in the city of New York as a most successful artisan. He was, for many years, a prominent ship builder, and accumulated a fortune of princely dimensions by the prosecution of this business. As we shall have occasion to speak of him again, we may as well give the reader an inkling into his character. He had two ruling passions—pride and love of money. Perhaps he was not singular in this respect; but, as in his case, these passions exerted a powerful influence upon the destiny of others, we wish to draw attention to them as tyrannical, and destructive in their effects, when indulged at the expense, or to the annihilation of higher and more ennobling princi-

ples. He was well, and favorably known to Friend Ring for many years before the date of our story, or rather, *history*, for we chronicle most faithfully things that have been.

CHAPTER XIV.

"MISFORTUNES NEVER COME SINGLY."

AT nine o'clock, Dr. Arnold came in, and without asking a question took the nerveless hand in his and felt the pulse, small and thread-like still. 'Elma turned her head feebly, and raising her eyes supplicatingly to his face, asked, in a voice low and feeble, —

"Doctor, may I go to-morrow? I am quite strong now."

They were the first words she had spoken, and the sound of her voice, composed and rational, brought a thrill of joy to every heart there present.

"We shall see, we shall see," replied the doctor, patting her hand tenderly, as he held it. "You must promise me to eat something now, or I cannot promise to let you go."

"I cannot," she said despairingly. "I do not need anything; only let me go."

"So you shall, my dear; but you must gather a

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little strength first. To-morrow afternoon, perhaps, you will be able."

"So long, oh, so long to wait," she murmured; and, burying her face in the pillow, she settled into silence again. She had not noticed that Levi was there, for the lamp that Judy had brought in when the doctor came was low, and shaded so as to shed but little light. She had not seen *him*, but he had heard *her*, and had gathered up the tones of her voice into his heart, to listen to again long, long afterward.

At midnight she revived a little and spoke composedly to her cousin, asking to go to her own room, and begging them to rest, assuring them she was much better. Judy came and assisted her to reach her own apartment, where Cousin Catharine and Hope remained with her during the night. "Thee must sleep, dear cousin," she said, "for to-morrow we have a journey to take. I shall try to rest too. Kiss me, and let me feel thee near me, I am so lonesome." Cousin Catharine kissed her tenderly, and lying close beside her soon fell asleep. Hope, too, soon slept, and 'Elma was alone with her sorrow, sleepless and wretched. She did not weep or murmur now: that was past, and tears brought her no relief. She was thinking of the old home, so cheerful when she left it, so sad and desolate

now. It was a long and gloomy night to her, but day dawned at last, and the sun rose bright and beautiful. She raised her head as the first beams stole in at her window and danced merrily upon the carpet, and casting a glance out into the clear morning light she thought of her father's grave, lying gray and cold in that early morning sun. She was weary and exhausted, and when Cousin Catharine awoke she found her sleeping with her head resting on her hand, and her elbow supported by the pillow, just the position she had taken when the sun peeped in at her. She slept for an hour very quietly; then her face became flushed, her breathing was rapid, and broken sentences murmured in a low, sad voice gave evidence that fever was burning in her veins. The doctor came early, hoping she might so far have recovered from her first great shock as to be able to undertake the required journey; but when his eyes fell upon her flushed face and he saw how troubled was her sleep, he shook his head and said—as if to himself—"Not to-day, 'Elma, not to-day." But she did not hear him, for her slumber was very deep. He sat by her side for half an hour, feeling her pulse, and giving directions with reference to the remedies to be used. "There must be great care," he said, "great care. The brain is

threatened. I do not like this fever; if she is restless and excited when she wakes, let me know at once."

Having repeated this order, he left, and never was patient more tenderly cared for than was 'Elma.

That day Maude Everet's heart was very sad. She had been told in the morning of her friend's affliction and illness, and after school she asked permission to go home with Hope to offer her sympathy to her companion and favorite. 'Elma awoke calm and composed after the fever had passed away, and Maude was permitted to go to her room under the promise that they were not to talk too much. She was quite shocked to see the change a day had made in her friend. She was so pale, and her eyes so large and full of sorrow, that Maude was ready to shed tears at the sight, but Cousin Catharine touched her arm warningly and she was self-possessed and equal to the occasion. She kissed the pale cheek affectionately, and taking the offered hand, sat quietly holding it in her tender caressing way, without speaking for some moments; but in that silence there was expression of sympathy more deep than words could tell; their hearts met in a loving embrace, and 'Elma knew all that her friend would have said. Blessed and mysterious commun-

ion of hearts, who can tell wherein lies the secret of thy wondrous power? Why is it that in certain presences we feel comforted and happy, as though an atmosphere of soothing sympathy arising from the one heart was exhaled and taken into the other, until the two spirits blend into one genial influence, permeating throughout the whole mind and being, each with the other, no longer two, but one, diffusing peace, heart to heart, and mind to mind! Thus it was with these two young girls. Their beings mingled in that mysterious atmosphere of sympathy and there was little need of words. Words seemed so cold, the material voice so harsh in comparison with that soft, musical, heart-voice that they both understood so well. 'Elma was the first to speak.

"Maude," she said, in a low, heart-broken tone, "I am very wretched. I did not think I could ever feel like this. The world seems so dark with the shadow of his grave resting upon my heart."

"Yes, Daisy, those little mounds cast long dark shadows, reaching through years and over seas to find their resting-place; but shadows do not always linger."

"Thou wouldst say that I shall forget it after a time."

"No, not forget; yours is not a heart to forget, but after a time you will put it away among your

sacred things, in that chamber of your heart upon which is inscribed 'The Holy of Holies.' *Our* Holy of Holies is almost empty, dear Daisy. It is a sad thing to think if we live to be old it will be full of these griefs that have to be put away lest they should unfit us for the duties of every-day life."

"I shall not live to be old, Maude; I shall die before the storehouse is full."

"Nay, darling; he who sendeth afflictions and trials, sendeth also strength to bear them. He would not crush his creatures, but remembereth mercy always."

'Elma would have replied, but Maude expressed her fears that Cousin Catharine would banish her before she was willing to go if they continued to talk, so she only added, —

"Sit near me, then; nearer, Maude, nearer. Thy heart is strong and true; let me rest my head here that I may feel it beat;" and she laid her head trustingly upon her friend's shoulder, with her arm about her neck, and so she fell asleep again. Maude sat until the twilight began to deepen, and then, carefully removing the poor weary head to the pillow, she glided away noiselessly and sad.

'Elma had not said one word about the journey: she was so prostrated that it seemed as though the

effort of thinking about it was too much for her. She remained in this same state for three days, when she seemed to rally, and spoke anxiously of going to her mother. Dr. Arnold had promised she should go in two days, and she was moving about her room in a feeble, listless way, making some slight preparations for her journey. She wore no mourning robes, but one could read the marks of sorrow on her pallid cheek, and in her sad, thoughtful eye.

'Lidie had not been permitted to go to 'Elma's room during her illness lest her busy little tongue should disturb the quiet so indispensable there. She was very unhappy at this banishment, and seized upon the first opportunity to enter her cousin's chamber. On the morning of the day upon which 'Elma was to start for Cornwall, a letter was given by the postman to Judy, who went with it in quest of her mistress; but not finding her, she left it upon the table in the drawing-room. 'Lidie saw it, and made it an excuse to run up to her cousin's chamber, thinking her mother was there. Letter in hand, she stole up to the door, and rapped the smallest of little raps with her chubby little dimpled knuckles. The door was opened by 'Elma, who, delighted to see the rosy little face coming like a sunbeam into her quiet chamber, lifted her

up in her arms and kissed the fresh, dewy lips with unfeigned pleasure. The child saw the change that had taken place, and after looking inquiringly into 'Elma's face for a moment, she instinctively wound her arms around her favorite's neck, and laid her cheek to hers in a tender, caressing way, without saying a word.

"What has thee here, darling?" said 'Elma, taking the letter from her hand.

"A letter for mother," said the child, trying to take it again; "Judy couldn't find her, and I thought she was here."

"It is a letter for *me*, 'Lidie," said Elma, sinking into a chair, and, if possible, looking paler than before. She broke the seal with hasty, trembling hand, and read the first few lines. It was from Bessie Brown.

"Dear 'Elma," she said, "how can I find words to break to you the news of this last sad dispensation of Providence? How can I nerve myself to tell you of your mother's death!"

'Elma read no more: the letter dropped upon her lap, and with one great heart-throb she sank into insensibility. 'Lidie was frightened at her strange, lifeless look, and began crying in a loud, terrified voice, that soon brought her mother to the spot.

"What has thee been doing, 'Lidie?" said she.

"I tum to bring thee thy letter," said the child, reassured by her mother's appearance.

Cousin Catharine took the letter from 'Elma's lap and read the few first lines, which explained the mystery at once. She felt the wrist and heart of the insensible girl, and shuddered with dread apprehension when she found them pulseless as marble. Just at that instant she heard Levi's step upon the stairs and called him to her assistance. They laid her upon the bed; and while Cousin Catharine chafed her hands and used such restoratives as were at hand, Levi hastened to bring Dr. Arnold with all dispatch. Fortunately he met him coming to pay his morning visit, and in a very few moments they stood beside the insensible girl, anxious and fearful. The doctor prepared a remedy in less time than it takes us to tell it, and, having administered it, asked what new excitement had produced the attack. Cousin Catharine pointed to the letter, which he took, and having read the first lines, exclaimed,—

"This is severe indeed! Poor little 'Elma, poor little 'Elma!"

The same drops that had restored her to consciousness before, now brought her back to life again, and in a few moments the pulse began to flutter—feebly enough at first, but sufficient to give assurance of returning circulation. Levi stood

motionless, with his eyes bent anxiously upon her until the doctor said, "She is reviving." Then he turned to the window with a sigh of relief, and there were deep marks upon his palms, as though the fingers had been clenched so tightly that the nails had left every one its mark in a small crimson crescent. His face was not cold or cruel now: the lips were closed tightly, but in their usual expression of firmness and determination there was a mingling of sympathy so sweet, and in the eye such a gentle light of pity unexpressed by words, that one might have thought he was an elder brother, so pained did he seem by 'Elma's afflictions.

The stricken young creature lay for a long time in a state of apparent insensibility. The icy fingers had become warm and the breathing regular, but she evinced no consciousness of anything that was passing around her. Levi kindly offered his services in any way they might be required, but the doctor said there was nothing to be done but to administer the remedies regularly and keep her perfectly quiet. He would look in again in the early evening, he said, and raising his finger to impress the order, he repeated: "Quiet, *quiet*, remember will do everything for her." He left the room as he finished speaking, and Levi followed without a word.

'Lidie, who had been terrified at the proceedings, which of course she did not in the least understand further than that they were in some way connected with the letter she had taken, had run off to Judy as soon as Levi came in, and in her childish way had made her understand that there was fresh trouble above stairs, so that she was in momentary expectation of a summons, and when at length, after the doctor had gone, Cousin Catharine rang for her, she wasted no time in answering the summons. When she entered the room and saw 'Elma lying so colorless and still, she raised her hands and turned up her eyes in expression of the greatest astonishment. After having gone through this preliminary, she dropped the usual courtesy, and said in a most vehement whisper,—

"What's bin a blightin ob de purty blossom now?"

"More trouble, Judy, more trouble," said her mistress; "she has neither father nor mother now. I am afraid this last blow will be too much for her."

"Call on de Lor', missus, call on de Lor'. He can foteh her out ob de deep: ony ax him. He's shure to do it if he's axed," and Judy would have gone on her knees at the instant had not her mistress by a look and a motion of her hand prevented

her. Hastily giving the order for which she had summoned her, she dismissed her and was again alone in the chamber of affliction. Judy soliloquized as usual on her way to the kitchen. "De ways of de Lor' am pas findin' out. Now who can see de sense ob 'flictin dat poor chile what neber did no harm in all her life, makin' ob her poor little heart as sore as sore, and knockin' ob her down wid two sich great blows, one right atop ob tudder, till she look as white as a tater-top growin in a dark sullen. Oh de ways ob de Lor' am past findin' out, for shure. Dis darkie's looked at 'em, and tought about 'em dese twenty year back, and she don't know nothin' more about em dan she did at fust."

CHAPTER XV.

THE ANGEL PATIENCE.

WHEN Dr. Arnold came at twilight he found his patient as he had left her, with colorless lips and closed eyes, and apparently unconscious of everything that was passing around her. He looked troubled, and bit his lip, and knit his brow as though he was thinking very deeply. "It is an unusual case," he said, as if thinking aloud. "I thought she would have revived before this. Has she not spoken yet?" he asked.

"Not one word," replied Cousin Catharine; "she has lain as thee sees her since thee left her."

"We must try and rouse her," he said; and raising her head he placed a spoonful of some cool mixture between her lips and called her name. She swallowed the liquid, and when the doctor repeated her name she whispered,—

"Yes, father, I am coming; we come together, mother and I."

"She is dreaming," said Hope, who stood near

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the bed with tearful eyes. "'Elma, dear 'Elma, awake and let us hear thy voice."

The appeal was useless: she only whispered something that they could not understand, and sank again into silence. The doctor sat for an hour watching her intently, occasionally raising her head to administer the remedies, and calling her by name in hopes to see her return to consciousness, but in vain. She only moved her lips as if speaking in a dream, and beckoned feebly with her hand as though her mind was busy with the creatures of imagination.

"We can do nothing more," said the doctor as he rose to go. "These remedies, and *time*, will work a favorable change, I trust," and promising an early call the following morning, he left. Levi came in soon after and tapped gently at the door, which was opened by Hope. "May I come in?" he said. She did not answer in words, but taking his hand she drew him into the room and closed the door again. There was the same look of compassion upon his face as when he stood there before. After looking for a few moments upon the insensible girl, he approached Cousin Catharine and said, in the kindest of voices, "You will not hesitate to command if I can be useful? I will do anything—*anything*."

His voice trembled as he repeated the last word, and it was almost womanly in its sweetness and expression of feeling.

"The doctor says there is nothing to be done but wait with patience the result," she replied. Levi took a seat near the window, and then they all sat silently musing—*mus*ing. The blaze upon the hearth made grotesque figures on the wall, and danced upon the window-curtains, and darted long arrowy flashes of light out into the street, startling the passers-by with its sudden brightness, and then came back again to rest for a moment upon the pillow where lay the pale, motionless face, so deathlike in its stillness. Levi looked into the burning embers, and his face was thoughtful—*so* thoughtful that the look was remembered by those who saw it long afterward, when many other threads, both bright and sombre, had been woven in the web of fate.

The hours passed by, bringing no change to those who watched. 'Twas midnight: the bells tolled twelve. Still the three sat anxiously waiting—waiting—with no thought or desire to sleep. Levi lingered as though unwilling to be the first to break the deathlike stillness that reigned in the apartment. At length Cousin Catharine spoke to him, saying it were better that he should go now,

and if his services were required at any time during the night she would call him without hesitation. He rose as if still unwilling to go, and bidding them good night, and casting a look of the kindest interest upon 'Elma, left the apartment.

The night passed and still no change, no token of consciousness or recognition made glad the hearts of those who watched. In the gray morning Cousin Catharine thought she discovered symptoms of fever, and a slight restlessness assured her that her judgment was correct. It increased rapidly, and when the doctor came he found her with flushed cheeks, quick and labored breath, and eyes so bright that they seemed to throw out little scintillations of light as they rested upon him. But, alas, there was no sign of recognition there. She looked upon him as on a stranger, knitting her brow as if making an effort to think of something that was confused and indistinct. Then she shaded her eyes with her hand and resting upon her elbow, looked about as if in search of some one or something, but not discovering what she sought, for she sank back again upon the pillow with a sigh of disappointment.

"'Elma, I am glad to see you so strong this morn-

ing," said the doctor; "have you much pain in your head?"

She placed her finger on her lip as a mark of silence, and beckoning the doctor to come nearer she whispered in his ear,—

"Thee must speak very softly. The angels are here, and when there is any noise they flutter their white wings as though they would go away. I should be very wretched if they were to go. They have been singing to me all night; and when my head throbbed and ached they put their cool fingers on my forehead, and touched my burning eyes, and took away all the pain. See, here is one on my pillow now. She is fanning me with her beautiful wing, and it refreshes me like sweet music. See how she looks at me with her pure eyes. She says her name is Patience—I shall remember her name, for her face is just like it." Then stretching out her hand she said, "Do not go away; stay with me, Patience; yes, so; I will lay my head upon thy bosom and live with thee forever."

The doctor turned away and wiped a tear from his eye, and Cousin Catharine and Hope wept in the fulness of their sorrow. 'Elma was the only tearless one in the room. She nestled her cheek more closely to the pillow, and whispered softly, as

though communing with the beautiful creatures of her fancy. Hope stole up close to the doctor, and asked with a choking sob,—

"Will she die?"

"God only knows," he replied. "We must hope for the best, dear child; we will do all we can, and pray for his blessing upon our efforts." Then in whispered tones he gave his orders for the day and departed. He was met on the stairs by Levi, who asked with much interest after the patient, and looked sad and disappointed when the doctor told him of her state. At breakfast he asked after her again, and begged to be permitted to see her. Cousin Catharine consented, and after breakfast he accompanied her to 'Elma's chamber. When he approached her and offered his hand she smiled upon him, and placed her hand in his; it was hot and dry, and trembled as he held it. She withdrew it almost immediately, saying,—

"Patience frowns upon *thee*, and I tremble when I touch thee; yet thy eyes are kind. *Who art thou?*"

"I am Levi," he said,— "your friend Levi; and I am come to tell you how sorry I am that you are ill and afflicted."

"*Levi*," she repeated, as if striving to become familiar with the sound,— "*Levi!* oh I remember

now, it was thee I met in the wood when my flowers all withered and decayed. Why did the minister read the burial service at the wedding, Levi?"

She did not seem to notice that no one replied to her question, but began humming a tune, softly, and her voice was so low and plaintive that one could not listen to it unaffected, and turning away the young man left the room, sad and dispirited.

Hope could not be persuaded to go to school that day, consequently Maude received no tidings from her friend. Hope's absence made her uneasy and apprehensive of fresh trouble, and after school she obtained permission to go and spend an hour with 'Elma. Miss Willson sent many kind messages to her pupil, and Minnie Marston opened her warm little heart and poured out the sincerest expressions of sympathy and love; while Fannie Bruce — forbidden by pride to show any interest in the matter — said, —

"I guess she will live through it: many a girl has lost her father before 'Elma. You know he was only a rough old farmer, and one never gets to be very fond of such people. I expect grief is very becoming to her, and she will make the most of it. I wonder if she will go to the expense of dressing in mourning for him. I believe Quakers never wear mourning, do they Maude?"

A suppressed murmur of "*for shame*" sounded through the room as these remarks were concluded; and Fannie, not knowing what better to do, laughed a cold, heartless laugh, and glided from the apartment.

Maude was soon standing at Friend Ring's door, and the bell was promptly answered by Judy.

"How is Miss 'Elma to-day?" asked the young lady as the door closed behind her.

"Wuss, eber so much wuss to-day, missus; talkin' all de time 'bout de angels. De Lor' only knows what'll be the ind on't."

"Tell Miss Hope to come to me," said Maude, as Judy opened the drawing-room door for her.

"Yes, missus. Poor Miss Hope; she berry sorry now. Dere aint no light in de house since Miss Almy's quinched."

Hope came, and Maude soon learned of all their affliction. "May I see Daisy?" she asked, wiping the tears from her eyes as Hope concluded.

"I will ask sister," Hope replied, and Maude was left alone while she went on her errand. In a few moments she returned bringing a favorable answer, and a warning from Cousin Catharine to be prepared for the wandering state in which she would find 'Elma's mind. They entered the chamber

noiselessly, and Maude stood by the bedside. 'Elma lay with her eyes closed, and her face was as white as the pillow upon which her head rested. The room was shaded to a pleasant light, and Cousin Catharine sat intently regarding the apparently sleeping girl. The shadow of a smile lingered about the pale lips, and she looked so peaceful, and pure, that Maude shuddered when she looked upon her—the scene was so like death. She stood for some minutes gazing breathlessly upon the being she so much loved; then Cousin Catharine arose, and taking her hand said in a subdued voice,—

“She is very much changed, is she not?”

Before Maude could reply, 'Elma opened her eyes, and said in a low, pleasant voice,—

“No: Patience never changes; she is always the same; the others come and go, but *she* never leaves me.” Then discovering Maude she raised her head a little from the pillow as if to see her more nearly, and offering her hand seemed pleased to see her.

“Daisy, dear Daisy, I am sorry to find you ill, —so sorry, I have been quite miserable without you,” said Maude, stooping down and kissing the pale cheek. 'Elma looked at her inquisitively, then half closing her eyes, as if in deep thought, she seemed listening intently. After a

moment she put her hand to her head, and a smile stole across her face—so sad a smile that it seemed the reflection of tears—and she said, apologetically,—

“I could not think of it at first, but I remember now; there were daisies in the basket, and they withered with the honeysuckle and eglantine. The bride and groom went from the church to the burial ground, and my withered flowers are lying on their graves. Patience was speaking to me about that just now; she says they will all bloom again, and I shall have them, after a time, in her country, and they will never fade any more. There are no withered flowers in her country, she says.” Then taking Maude's hand she asked very earnestly,—

“Will thee come with Patience and me to her home?” Maude could not answer: her voice was choked with tears. 'Elma seemed to take her silence for refusal: she looked disappointed, and withdrawing her hand she clasped the slender fingers, and closing her eyes relapsed into a state of motionless silence. Maude turned from the bed, and taking a seat she buried her face in her handkerchief and wept tears of unfeigned sorrow. The doctor came while she was sitting there, and having looked at the patient, and

felt her pulse, he turned to Cousin Catharine and asked, "Is there any apparent change?" To which she replied sadly,—

"Not any."

Maude and Hope now left the room; the one to take her way homeward, the other to return after a brief space to share the cares and duties of the sick-chamber. Day after day the doctor came and went, looking anxiously for a change that tarried until hope itself grew sick and fearful. Night after night fond hearts hovered around the weary sufferer, until, worn and wasted, she was a mere shadow of her former self. No one was permitted to enter the chamber save those who watched and ministered to her necessities. Mrs. Everet and Maude came often to ask for her, but the doctor's commands were peremptory, and they were never allowed to see her. Nine days crept heavily by, laden with fears and apprehensions dread, but as the ninth day's sun sank down his western path the light of reason dawned once more on 'Elma's mind, and her scattered senses were gathered back to their accustomed uses. Cousin Catharine was sitting with her, as the early twilight gathered slowly her gray mantle o'er the earth, thinking and wondering what the end would be, when

suddenly a faint voice whispered her name. "Cousin Catherine," it said, "is thee here, or is it only a shadow I see; my mind seems full of shadows."

In an instant Cousin Catharine was at her side, speaking to her the kindest of words, in the softest and gentlest of voices. 'Elma raised her feeble arms and clasped them fondly around her cousin's neck, drawing her face down close beside her own. "Tell me," she said, "have I been very ill? I feel so faint and weak, as though my strength had all wasted in a day. I remember nothing since 'Lidie gave me the letter this morning."

"Yes, thee has been very ill, and we have been very sad and anxious about thee, but, thank God, thee is better now: let us thank him together, darling." Softly she disengaged herself from 'Elma's clinging arms, and sank upon her knees at the bedside. Reverently the feeble and wasted hands were clasped upon the breast of the young sufferer, and on the evening air there floated these few simple words. "Dear God, we thank Thee for all things." The words were few, and commonplace, but the hearts that bowed in gratitude were full, *too full* for expression, and He who needeth not the form of words, heard in their

quickened pulses a language of sincerity more precious than the most finished form of rhetoric could give.

When Dr. Arnold paid his evening visit he was cheered by the glance of recognition from the eyes that had so long looked upon him as a stranger. "Now God be thanked," he said, "for all His goodness." He laid his hand upon her head and found it cool and moist; he felt her pulse; 'twas regular, though slow and feeble. When the fact dawned upon his mind that 'Elma was once more herself, and that she was, though feeble as an infant, still much improved, he gave his head a succession of short affirmative nods, as if assuring himself that what he saw was really so. "*Better*," he said, "a great deal better. 'El-ma is ve-ry much i-m-p-r-o-v-e-d."

Cousin Catharine had been marking him closely, and as the last words were delivered in a peculiarly emphatic manner, she rose and joined him at the bedside, and the two spake cheerfully to the young creature who had hovered for so many days between life and death. She spoke but little, for the words came wearily, and the doctor cautioned her to quiet and repose.

CHAPTER XVI.

LAKE MAHOPAC.

THE news of 'Elma's improved state flew rapidly. Levi's heart thrilled with joy when he was told how she had spoken rationally, and that the doctor pronounced her much improved; and when Hope was seen entering the school-room, she was beset with eager questions, for 'Elma had found her way to the hearts of the majority of her school-mates and teachers. Maude stood and listened as Hope replied to the inquiries of one and another of her companions, and when she heard the cheering news, she turned away quietly to her own desk to hide the big tears that happiness sent welling up from her grateful heart.

That afternoon Mr. Everet's carriage stood at Friend Ring's door, while Mrs. Everet, Maude, and Harry sat in the drawing-room and listened to the cheerful voice of Cousin Catharine as she told of the improved state of her they all so much loved. The doctor prohibited visitors as yet, so they did

not see her; but when they were gone there lay upon 'Elma's pillow a bouquet of the choicest flowers, and on the little table at her bedside stood a basket of delicious fruit. She looked from one to the other, as the delicate fragrance of the purple heliotrope mingled with the perfume of the tempting contents of the basket, and a pleasant and gratified smile played for an instant around her pale lips as she murmured, "How thoughtful they are of me! I ought to be very happy."

Then the smile faded away, and tears fell quietly on her pillow, as she thought of the great grief that had fallen upon her. Very, very slowly her strength returned. Day after day she lay there, propped up with pillows, weak and heart-sick, and sad; never murmuring, but always patient, and grateful to those who were kind to her. Then came a change to the sofa. Tenderly lifted in the kind old doctor's arms, she was placed so that she could look out upon the sky, and see at evening the pale moon wading through the ether blue; and she would fancy, side by side, two lonely graves, with the long, arrowy beams of quivering light glancing and shimmering upon them through the live-long night. She had learned to think calmly of her affliction: it seemed a long time since it came upon her, and the beautiful angel of patience, that she

had fancied hovering around her pillow during her days of darkness, seemed to have left with her the true spirit of her own angelic character.

In course of time her chamber was made cheerful by the presence of friends. Levi was the first one permitted to see her. Day after day he would ask, "May I go to-morrow?" and when the answer came, "Thee *may* go to-morrow," his face wore its most cordial, winning expression, and one would not have thought who saw him then that it ever could look harsh or cruel. Maude came next, and 'Elma would sit for hours holding her hand, and looking into the clear, trustful eye, as she read to her from their favorite books, or told her of what was passing in their little circle at school, or spoke of the loved ones at home. And so the time passed, each day bringing its morsel of strength to the enfeebled frame, and its slightly deepened tint to the cheek of the invalid. As the days grew warmer and longer, Dr. Arnold gave her permission to ride out, and Maude and Harry were once more happy when she took her seat in the carriage beside them, and Piedro was ordered to restrain the spirited horses to a gentler speed in consideration of her feeble strength.

She never spoke of going to her old home; there was nothing now for which she cared to go save to

look upon her parents' graves. All needful matters had been attended to by near friends in the immediate neighborhood, and she seemed to have a dread of seeing the old place under its painfully changed circumstances.

When the summer came, and Miss Willson's establishment for young ladies had closed for the season, Mr. and Mrs. Everet proposed to Cousin Catharine that 'Elma should be permitted to accompany them to the country for a few weeks, and Maude and Harry so strongly seconded this proposition that the question was settled with but little hesitation.

"I shall be a dull companion for thee, Maude," 'Elma said; "I feel as though it would be almost ungenerous for me to join your cheerful, pleasant party, when I feel so sad. I shall be like a dark cloud in thy pleasant home. Leave me here with my sorrow until thee returns; I shall have learned to bear it more cheerfully then. Do, dear Maude, and take with thee some more light-hearted companion, who will not tax thee day after day with the sight of a gloomy face, as I should do. My path lies among the dark shadows now, thine is all sunshine."

"For that very reason, Daisy, I will not give you up; we will go hand in hand. Thou shalt share

with *me* thy shadow, and I with *thee* my sunshine; so shall our hearts, through sympathy, grow strong in sisterly affection; and when *my* dark days come, as come they must, I will lay my head upon thy bosom, and it shall be *thy* turn to comfort *me*. This pale, sorrowful face of thine is dearer to me than before the shadows fell upon it; much dearer, Daisy." She drew her head down upon her bosom as she spoke, and passed her delicate fingers over the white forehead in a tender, caressing way that filled 'Elma's heart with as much happiness as it was capable of feeling at the time. She made no reply, but silently pressed the hand she held, and silence gave consent that things should be as her friend desired.

Mr. Everet had purchased and fitted up a cottage in Westchester County for the accommodation of his family during the summer season, and thither, on the first of July, accompanied by 'Elma, they proceeded. The vicinity is now notorious in the fashionable world, and its hotels are thronged with gay and thoughtless pleasure-seekers, and invalids linger on the shores of Lake Mahopac until autumn scatters her melancholy tokens of decay, warning them to depart. In the days of which we write, it was a wild, retired, beautiful spot, little frequented by citizens who cared to make the sum-

mer a season of display or fashionable dissipation. It was for its retirement, its beautiful drives, its numerous lakes of limpid waters, scattered here and there in incomparable beauty, that it had been selected as the summer residence of our friends the Everets. Everything in the arrangement of their cottage was in the strictest keeping with the rules of taste and elegance. There was no attempt at display, but an air of refinement and purity pervaded every department of the household; and as Maude moved about from one apartment to another, in her quiet happiness, she gave the finishing touch to the scene of beauty.

'Elma was very weary when they reached their journey's end, just as the sun was giving his last good-night kiss to the waters of the Lake Mahopac, and Harry gave her his arm and conducted her to the library, where a luxurious sofa invited her to repose. Maude removed her bonnet and mantle and arranged the pillows temptingly for her head, and bidding Harry bring her a glass of wine, she proceeded to remove her own travelling garments. 'Elma looked around the apartment in a perfect state of bewilderment and admiration. The sash was open, and the cool breath of the early evening floated in, laden with the perfume of buds and blossoms, giving them a fragrant wel-

come to their wildwood home. Harry brought the wine as directed, and 'Elma paused as she took it in her hand to inquire, "Am I to take all this, Maude?"

"Every drop," Maude replied.

"Well, I'll bid you good-night then," said 'Elma, "Good-night, Harry; call me in time for breakfast, please."

"You have just one hour to snooze before dinner, Daisy, and I am going to leave you for a little while now, for I expect mamma requires some of my assistance; so be a good child until I come for you;" and stooping down she kissed 'Elma's forehead, and placing a hand on either cheek she looked into her eyes, and shaking her head very wisely she said, "Oh, thou little Daisy, what fairy tales I can read in those black eyes of thine!" and with another kiss she glided gracefully away through the open door to seek her mother.

In a few moments the wine had taken effect, and 'Elma dropped off into a light, refreshing slumber. She must have slept some time, for when she awoke it was twilight, and the young crescent moon was looking in upon her, and the vines that crept about the window were reflected on the wall above the sofa where she lay.

Turning her head a little she saw that there was another shadow there, so distinctly traced that she had no difficulty in recognizing it. It was the figure of Harry Everet. He had thrown himself into a chair just outside the window. His head was bowed, his face covered with his hands, and his attitude one of deep sorrow. She half-rose in her surprise at seeing the light-hearted Harry in this attitude of apparent dejection, and as she did so a deep sigh escaped his lips, and they murmured, too indistinctly for her to understand, a name; then, rising, he paced the length of the piazza with a quick, nervous step, and returning, paused before the window and looked in. 'Elma did not wish him to know that she had witnessed his depression, so she remained very quiet in order that he might think she still slept. Then he went on pacing back and forth until Maude came in, followed by a servant bringing a lamp. When she saw that the moon had made its bringing a work of supererogation, and how the apartment was made beautiful by her tracery and silver sheen, she said,—

"Mary, you may take it away; we need no lamp here; it spoils everything."

"Have you slept, Daisy?" she asked, approaching the sofa.

"Oh, yes, a delicious little sleep, without so

much as the shadow of a dream; and I awoke in this beautiful moonlight that seems so holy. I almost feared to stir, lest I should disturb it. I fancy sometimes that the spirits of my parents come in this form to visit me, I feel such reverence for it. Is it not heavenly, Maude?"

"Yes; come to the window and see it dancing upon the waters of the lake."

They approached the window and looked out.

If it was sad and holy within, it was merry without, for there upon the blue waters it sparkled and glanced, never resting for an instant upon the rippling tide. The border of grand old trees, that encircled the lake, was reflected with exaggerated beauty far down among the waters; and the stars stole in and out among their branches, and looked at themselves in the clear, crystal mirror. Now a fleecy speck of cloud floated over the face of the beautiful queen, from behind which she would presently emerge with increased brilliancy, to dart her long, arrowy beams away down to the pebbly bottom of the lake, kissing the fairies that, tradition tells us, dwelt there in the days of eld. It did not require any very great stretch of imagination to see the wild children of the forest paddling their graceful canoes over the sparkling waters of the beautiful lake, whose name brings to us, in the

nineteenth century, an echo from the past, that murmurs reproachfully, "The red man is passing away: his canoe floats no longer on Mahopac; and soon the last moccasin will have passed away to the hunting ground of his fathers!"

As the two young girls stood at the window, Harry paused in his walk and stood near them, silently looking upon the sparkling waters. It was a beautiful tableau, and it seemed a pity to disturb it; but one cannot live on moonshine, and Maude suddenly remembered that she had come to take 'Elma out to supper, just as a servant entered with a message from Mrs. Everet, requesting the immediate presence of the young people at the supper-table. They obeyed; and truly a most tempting repast was spread for them. Such biscuits, such strawberries and cream, such cottage cheese, such fragrant golden butter, could not but tempt the most fastidious and delicate appetite; and 'Elma, as well as all other members of the company, did ample justice to the delicacies.

After supper Maude seated herself at the piano and began touching, in a subdued tone, some melancholy minor chords; then she strayed off into modulations, and after indulging her fancy for a time in that sort of exercise, she struck a key that seemed to awaken some recollection of the past,

and drawing a deep sigh, she touched a delicate accompaniment and sang a few lines of a beautiful tenor song; then she stopped suddenly, and when 'Elma begged her to go on she turned from the instrument and said, —

"Nay, Daisy, I am too weary to sing to-night, and besides, I cannot sing that song; it does not suit my voice; it is for a gentleman."

"Is not that the song your friend Philip Stetson sings so beautifully?" asked 'Elma.

The "*yes*" that fell from Maude's lips was very faint, and she turned to close the instrument as she uttered it, so that 'Elma did not see the expression of her face, and when she turned towards her again it had passed away, and she noticed nothing unusual.

CHAPTER XVII.

LETTERS OF INVITATION AND INSINUATION.

THE morning dawned bright and beautiful, and after an early breakfast, the young people went out for a drive, to enjoy the cool and refreshing breezes of the early morning. 'Elma looked almost happy as they descended from the carriage, to stroll down to the miniature shores of Lake Gleneida, and as she stooped over the clear pellucid water, to watch the little fish darting hither and thither in their graceful and fascinating sport, the face that was reflected in the glassy surface wore just enough of sadness to invest it with the interest of sympathy, and was, with its deepened and intensified expression, as lovely a picture—*so Harry thought*—as was ever given back to mortal view by the pure element that makes pictures of the moon and stars.

We need not tell how day after day came and went, each one rivalling its predecessor in innocent and healthful enjoyment. We need not tell how,

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day after day, the orphan girl stole into the hearts of those who had so generously taken her into their home and affections. The young cannot long resist the witchery of kindness and fond solicitude, and it was no wonder that at the expiration of a month 'Elma found herself becoming more cheerful, and taking an interest in her surroundings which she at one time thought it would be impossible for her ever to feel again. Had she been worldly wise, or calculating, as most young ladies of her age, she might have noticed and understood many things that now passed totally unobserved. If Harry made his appearance at the breakfast table late, and looking pale and anxious, she told him he must not sit up so late studying; the day was long enough, and love of knowledge must not be indulged at the expense of health; and when he made no reply, but only looked at her very seriously, she felt confused, and as though her advice was likely to do but little good. She thought him so wise, so everything that was good and noble, it seemed almost presumptuous for her to proffer from her small store of knowledge, any suggestions with reference to his conduct.

One day after dinner when, as usual, the letters were placed on the table before Mr. Everet, who

always distributed them to their rightful owners, he said, —

"We have more than usual to-day; here are letters for everybody. Judging from the size and superscription of this one, Maude, I should think it contained something of vast importance; and here is another, as compact and neat as its companion is overgrown and showy." He passed them to her with several others as he spoke, and the remarkable one was, of course, the first one opened. 'Elma and Harry were busy with their own, so Maude read hers through without interruption. When they had all finished reading Harry went and stood behind his sister, and asked to be favored with a sight of the letter which had called forth his father's remark.

"Certainly," she said; "it is as much for you as for me," and passing it to him she watched while he read it, with the very spirit of fun and mischief dancing in every feature of her face.

"Mary Ann Marston!" he exclaimed as he finished reading; "by Jove, that will be a gay affair; a perfect God-send in these days of delicious monotony.

"Here is one from Minnie," said Maude, placing it in his hand as he restored the other. While he is reading it we will explain. Minnie and her parents

had been spending the summer, thus far, at a fashionable watering place, and having become weary of the constant round of pleasure and excitement they had come to spend a month quietly with their relatives in Westchester County. Our readers will remember that Mary Ann had taken a great fancy to Maude, and as soon as she knew that they were only separated by a few miles she made up her mind to renew the acquaintance, never doubting that Maude would be as happy as herself to do so. Minnie had written immediately upon her arrival, announcing the fact, and Mary Ann, in the exuberance of her generous and hospitable feelings, declared she would drop a line to "Miss Evert" herself, for she would love above all things to see her and Minnie at the farm together, and now she thought of it she had been going to have company for some time, and she would just make one job of it and have them all together. She wanted to introduce Minnie to some of her friends, and it would be just the thing to bring them together. After due consideration she decided to invite them for Thursday evening; she would ask Maude and Harry to come early and bring their friend with them, and they could have a sociable time before the others got there. She wrote accordingly, inviting them for Thursday afternoon and evening

and never was invitation more cordial or kindly in its expression. The heart that dictated it was as ample in its benevolence and genial sentiments as was the mammoth sheet that conveyed the message, inelegant as it was. Maude had told 'Elma of Mary Ann, and of her open rebuke to Fannie Bruce, and they had laughed over it as a good and wholesome lesson to the overbearing beauty. By the way, Minnie had told Maude in her letter that Fannie was spending the summer at Rockaway, and was creating quite an excitement by her beauty and style. She was the acknowledged belle, and, happy in her power she wielded the sceptre with a tyrant's will.

"You'll go, of course, girls?" said Harry. "I shall have no hesitation as far as *I* am concerned. I wish Phil Stetson had accepted my invitation for next week so that we might have taken him along with us. I wonder why he has not written. I thought I should receive a letter to-day. I suppose he is absorbed with some of those brilliant Rockaway beauties, and quiet country friends like us are not worth remembering."

Maude looked up at her brother as though his words had startled her. Where was it she had heard them before? They were very familiar to her, but she could not remember who had spoken them.

She did not realize that her heart had whispered them to her day after day until she had brought herself to believe them, *unwillingly* perhaps, but *firmly* nevertheless. She had received one letter from Fannie, in which she spoke of Philip as being fascinated by a Southern girl of dark, wild beauty. "I am glad of this," Fannie wrote, "for I could not bear to think of that plain little Quakeress exercising such a power over him with her sly ways and seeming innocence. You'll find her out yet, Maude. Philip loves her, I know, and *she* knows it too, though she seems so artless, as though she were making no effort to captivate him, and all the time she is spreading her snares in the most masterly way. Forgive me, dear Maude, for speaking thus of your friend, but I cannot bear to see you so deceived."

Harry had seen this letter, and, although he protested that Fannie's assertions had not the shadow of truth about them, they gave him more pain than he was willing to admit. "If Philip loves her," he said, "it is a voluntary offering; she may know it too, and return it perhaps, but she spreads no snares—she needs none. Never let this artful girl rouse a suspicion in your heart of 'Elma's truth. Nature has given her a charm to captivate all hearts; that charm is truth and inno-

cence, and she makes as little effort to fascinate as does the bird that sings in yonder rose-tree. He sings because God has put music in his little throat, and he *could* not, if he *would*, resist the utterance of melody. So *she* charms by the unaffected use of the graces that spring from a pure, warm heart. They speak in every lineament, in every expression, in every feature; every tone of her voice is rich with the fragrance that springs from the pure blossoms of disinterested goodness; every glance of her eye distils the heavenly dew of sympathy, and she *could* not, if she *would*, help charming."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"FANNIE WAS MISTAKEN."

ON Saturday Mary Ann Marston's letter of invitation was received. The intervening days passed by with nothing worthy of note, stealing away in a quiet, dreamy, delicious atmosphere of home happiness to those assembled at the Everet cottage. Thursday came, a warm, bright August day. At breakfast Harry broached the subject of the visit, and Maude declared herself quite ready to accompany him; "but," said she, "you will be obliged to help me coax Daisy, for she protests she will not go."

"Not go?" said Harry, "and why not, pray?"

"I do not feel like attending parties just now," replied 'Elma, "and had much rather spend the evening at home with Friend Everet."

"It is not a party," urged Harry; "I would not ask you to attend a party. You *must* go, you must indeed, 'Elma."

She smiled, but Harry would rather she had *not*

smiled, for it was sadder than tears, and he knew it was done to hide the aching of her heart.

"Do not urge 'Elma to go if she does not wish it," said Mrs. Everet. "We must let her have her own way, and if she chooses to decline this invitation we will go out for a drive this afternoon, so that the time will not pass heavily."

"Well, well," returned Maude, "she must act as will make her most happy; but I shall only half enjoy myself without her;" and kissing her fondly on the cheek she led her down to the lake, where they were never tired of floating about in the fairy boat that they had learned to manage most admirably. They had stepped on board, and floated into the middle of the stream, where they stopped to gather some of those pure, pale lillies that delight to bathe in the pellucid waters, when they heard voices from among the trees shouting, "ship-a-hoy!" and turning to listen they saw Harry and another gentleman emerge from among the shadows and stand upon the shore, waving their handkerchiefs as a signal for them to return. They put the tiny oars into requisition and were soon moored at the point from which they had departed; but before they reached the landing place they had recognized Harry's companion, and looking at each other exclaimed at the same instant,

"*Philip Stetson!*" Maude's face flushed, and the oars moved nervously, scattering the cool drops over 'Elma's face and hands. She cast a glance of deep scrutiny upon her friend, as though she would read in that instant the truth she so ardently longed to know. Not a muscle of 'Elma's face moved, not a shade of color deepened on cheek or brow; her oars moved on steadily, and there was no token of an increased pulsation at her heart. Maude drew a deep sigh of relief, and inwardly breathed, "*Fannie was mistaken.*"

The gentlemen stepped into the boat, and Philip, having exchanged salutations and received a friendly shake of the hand from each, begged them to shove off and give him a specimen of their rowing. They did so; and the tiny boat glided away over the miniature waves fleetly as the swift-winged bird skims through the upper air. Philip sat spell-bound. The exercise had brought a bright color even to 'Elma's pale cheeks; and Maude's face was glowing with health and beauty; never had she looked more lovely. Philip was enchanted. Laying his hand upon the oar he said, "We must not tax you too far; let's rest here a while." Harry took the oars from 'Elma, and his voice was low and full of feeling as he said, "It was very thoughtless of me to let you weary

yourself in this way, but the exercise was so becoming I could not bear to interrupt it."

They floated about for a while, chatting pleasantly; and Harry told Philip of their intended visit to Mary Ann, inviting him to accompany them, which he declared he should be most happy to do. The sun now poured down too intense a heat for them to remain longer, so they rowed back to the shore and took shelter in the cottage from his overpowering rays. What a happy company they were, and what a genial light spread over Mr. Everet's face as he welcomed Philip to their country home!

The hours glided away pleasantly until the clock struck four, when Maude expressed her opinion that it was time to make ready for their visit, and the young people accordingly repaired to their own rooms to make such preparations as were necessary. 'Elma accompanied Maude to her dressing-room, only too happy to render her any assistance she might require in the arrangement of her toilet. Her dress was simple in the extreme. A snowy, transparent muslin, with a broad blue sash, and a bouquet of scarlet verbenas and small white roses for her hair, constituted her adornments. She wore no jewels of any kind; and indeed they would have seemed out of place where there was so much

of nature, and so little of art. 'Elma expressed her approbation in words of fond endearment, and having placed the flowers in Maude's hair with exquisite taste, she took from her own bosom a single spray of fragrant orange blossoms and transferred it to Maude's, saying, "This is my congratulation, darling; wear it to-night to remind thee of her into whose life thou hast shed so much of happiness."

She looked into Maude's eyes with a tender, earnest expression that showed she had read her heart's secret; then, laying her head trustingly upon Maude's shoulder, she murmured, — "How happy thou must be, to love and be beloved; thine is a happy lot, dear Maude. The heart covets affection, and this world is very lonely when those who have loved us best are sleeping all unmindful of our joys and woes. When the heart is lonely and dispirited, and we would fain hear words of love and comfort, 'tis very sad to listen to the far-off echoes coming back from the years of childhood, and know that echoes are all we can ever hear from those dear lips that smiled upon and blessed us when the dim eyes were just opening upon the better land. Oh, Maude, I so long for love! my life is one long yearning prayer for affection — such affection as thou hast, from parents, and brother, and from —"

she stopped, and her head bowed low, as though she had betrayed a weakness in the expression of her inmost heart, even to that dear friend.

Maude raised her head tenderly, and looked into the beautiful eyes; there were no tears there, but they were so sad it seemed as though the tears had all trickled away in the words she had been speaking, and there was not one left to cool and refresh the aching orbs so full of tender, melancholy light.

"Art thou not loved, Daisy? Do we not all love thee most fondly,—my father and mother, and Harry? Did I not love thee so well myself, I should be quite jealous, I do assure thee."

"I know, I know," 'Elma replied; "I ought to be very grateful and happy; and so I *am* grateful, but there is still a voice that is constantly whispering to me, '*Alone, alone.*' I have many friends, I believe, who love me, but there are degrees to that word, and what I long for is its *fullest sense*. Oh, to know that some one loved me, who would continue through all time to feel to me the same; to know that when time for us had ended, one angel would feel that Heaven was the brighter for *my* being there! I am afraid I am very selfish, Maude, and that thou wilt think me very weak and foolish; but if thou couldst know how I treasure every

word of kindness, and how this longing for affection absorbs my whole being, thou wouldst not wonder that I shrink from contact with those who are cold and careless to me."

Maude had drawn 'Elma's head closely down upon her shoulder while she was speaking, and pressed her cheek fondly to the pure white forehead that rested there in implicit, child-like confidence. She did not speak for a moment, but stood passing her hand gently over the raven curls that fell in such abundance around the pale young face.

"'Elma, dear 'Elma," she said at length, "thou *wilt* be loved as only such as thou *shouldst* be. There is, somewhere in this wide world, another heart waiting and yearning for just such affection as thou couldst give. Your sympathies, *even now*, are reaching forth toward each other; gradually, but *surely*, time and circumstances will bring you together; then, the atmosphere exhaled from kindred spirits will blend and harmonize your minds, and ye shall rest in confidence, blessing each other, and *both be satisfied*."

Harry's voice, admonishing Maude that it was five o'clock, and reminding her that they had a drive of five miles before them, put an end to the conversation, and the two girls descended the

stairs together. They were met on the piazza by Philip, who protested against 'Elma's spending a solitary evening at home when she might have the pleasure of an introduction to Miss Mary Ann Marston.

"It is certainly an inducement," she replied, "and I should very much like to see Minnie, but I do not care to meet strangers, and must defer the pleasure you speak of until another time. Remember my love to Minnie, please, and many thanks to Miss Marston for her kind invitation."

"I shall remember," said Maude, kissing her affectionately. "And mind you spend the evening with papa and mamma, not alone in your own room."

Philip and Harry followed her into the carriage as she spoke the last words, and with a wave of the hand to 'Elma, they were off.

CHAPTER XIX.

"UP OUR WAY," OR HOW THEY DID THINGS IN THE COUNTRY.

PHILIP was enchanted with the drive, which was entirely new to him, and lay along the most cultivated and beautiful portion of the county. The horses seemed to feel the bracing effect of the pure mountain air, for they trotted along at a pace that showed how willingly they did their work, and in the space of half an hour they had halted at the gate of the farm-house. Truly, it was no wonder that Mary Ann had expressed a love of home, for it was a perfect nestling place of beauty. Roses and clematis clambered about the long, low piazza, that stretched along the entire length of the building, which was low, and half hidden among the most superb maple and elm trees. Only here and there a glimpse of the snowy cottage might be seen as it peeped out from among their shadows. Flower beds in all sorts of fanciful shapes were scattered about,

and the grass was as clean and fresh as the most abundant care could make it. As they entered, and proceeded up the lawn, a magnificent Newfoundland dog rose lazily from the grass beneath the branches, and shaking himself importantly walked deliberately in front of them, turning back occasionally to see if all was right, as much as to say, "Come along, you are very welcome, we live at home here, you see." As he stepped upon the piazza, he gave a sharp bark and stopped, as though he meant to say, "You can wait here till some one comes." Maude was terrified when she heard his great voice, but Philip suggested that he had a benevolent countenance, and there was no need for alarm. Harry was just considering the propriety of passing him, in order to use the great brass knocker that was as spotless and brilliant as an abundant amount of rotten stone and willing hands could make it, when a little ebony-faced girl, of about eleven years of age, made her appearance, and with a courtesy that did honor to Mary Ann's teaching, asked them to "walk in de parlor, and take a cheer."

She seemed to be expecting them, for she waited for no names or orders, but skipped off up the broad, flat stairs, to inform her young mistress of their arrival. The interior confirmed the impres-

sions given by the external appearance of the establishment. Everything conveyed the idea of abundance and the most scrupulous neatness. The parlor carpet was a pattern of the most showy dimensions and dazzling brilliancy of colors—bright scarlet and green. The furniture was of the gothic style,—high, straight-backed chairs, and a sofa of mammoth dimensions, covered with bright scarlet cloth, to match the carpet. Numerous small stools—or *crickets*, as the country people call them—worked in worsted, showed by the newness and polish of their frames that they were of recent date, and bore evidence to Mary Ann's habits of industry. A small oval mirror hung between the windows, ornamented with sprigs of asparagus, and snowy white muslin curtains, looped aside with broad scarlet ribbons, gave the room an appearance of freshness and cheerfulness that almost atoned for its too gaudy fitting up. The walls, white and spotless as snow, were ornamented with some curious, quaint old paintings, of a style that would be very difficult to describe, and the high, narrow mantelpiece rejoiced in a pair of china vases that had been handed down from generation to generation, until they had become objects of family pride from their antiquity and numerous associations. Each of these contained a bouquet, so tastefully and delicately ar-

ranged that it was plain to be seen that Minnie's little fingers had been busy with them. On the old-fashioned mahogany tea-table stood a cut-glass dish that prided in having come safely through all the perils of half a century, and in this were arranged a great variety of flowers of every hue, beautifully blended and harmonized in every shade of coloring. Minnie had spent the morning in indulging her taste in this way, and she had succeeded in producing the most pleasing and charming effect. A large bunch of peacocks' feathers, tied with a scarlet ribbon, stood in the corner of the room, and served the double purpose of ornament and fly-driver. It took but a moment to note the arrangement of the apartment, but before it was concluded voices were heard approaching, and almost immediately the two young ladies entered. The one was quiet and graceful, conveying by her smile and expression of countenance the pleasure she felt at meeting her friends; the other was full of protestations of delight at "*seein' 'em at the old place.*" She kissed Maude, and shook hands vehemently with Philip and Harry, and welcomed them in such hearty, earnest style as only a warm-hearted, unsophisticated country girl, unacquainted with the forms of elegant society, could do.

A thousand regrets followed the announcement

that 'Elma could not be persuaded to come, and Maude explained her indisposition to go into society at the present time, and delivered her message of love to Minnie, and her thanks and kind remembrance to Mary Ann.

Minnie was dressed for the evening in her favorite color,—sky-blue,—and looked as pure and lovely as the element whose tint she had borrowed. Mary Ann had thought best to defer the final arrangements until after tea, and appeared, for the time being, in a pink muslin.

"Well," she said, after the first ordinary interchange of compliments had been gone through with, "what do you think of the old place? I expect your'n beats it all to pieces, Miss Everet."

"I think it most beautiful," Maude replied, "and do not wonder that you feel pride in it. These magnificent old trees inspire me with a perfect reverence. I should be quite happy to spend my whole life in a place like this."

"Would you though?" questioned Mary Ann, her whole face glowing with delight at Maude's admiration. "How do you think Miss Bruce would like it?"

"I do not think Fanny would care for any place where there was not constant company and ex-

citement. She is at Rockaway, and is having a very gay time; she is quite a belle, I am told."

"Well she may be," replied Mary Ann; "she's handsome enough for anything, and seems to make herself very entertainin' when there's any gentlemen around."

Mary Ann knew that Philip was Fannie's cousin, so she forbore making any further remarks in consideration of his feelings. 'Phelia appeared in the course of half an hour at the parlor door, her ebony face all aglow with smiles, and taking up her new red dress on either side between her thumb and fingers she dropped the stereotyped courtesy, and announced in a nasal tone, "Tea am ready, Miss Mary Ann." That young lady rose accordingly, and offering her arm to Harry, she requested Minnie to attend to Miss Everet and Mr. Stetson, and they all repaired to the dining-room, or, as Mary Ann termed it, the "keepin' room," where they were introduced to Mary Ann's father and mother, two rare specimens of health and happiness. It would be difficult to say which parent the daughter most resembled, she was so like both, and still they did not in the least resemble each other. Minnie's mother was suffering from a severe headache, produced by over exercise; her love of rural enjoyment often led her to take too lengthy a stroll,

and she always paid the penalty in this way, so she did not make her appearance at the supper-table. Mary Ann took her seat at the tray and performed the part of hostess to admiration. 'Phelia danced attendance to her every motion, and seemed quite at home in her position as waitress. She seemed to have imbibed the idea that city people were very fond of cream, and she paid particular attention to it, passing the pitcher from one to another, and always announcing what it contained in a particularly luxurious tone. The table groaned under its weight of delicacies, and Mary Ann, in the abundance of her hospitality, urged her guests to partake again and again of the cake, which was in great variety, and the preserves, all the perfection of their kind, and made, as she boastingly declared, by her own hands.

"City people won't consider it no great 'complishment, daughter, to be able to do sich things; it's only farmer folks what prizes a gal for knowin' how to keep house, and make sweetmeats, and cakes, and the like o' that," said her father.

"Oh, uncle, you are very much mistaken," said Minnie. "I would give ever so much to be able to do such things as Mary Ann does. Mamma has such trouble to get them done nicely, but here it

seems a pleasure for cousin to do them all. I am going to take some lessons next week."

Her uncle laughed a great round laugh, and taking hold of her soft little hand he said, —

"No, no, niece, these little hands aint fit fur't. Stick to yer piannie; it suits you better'n mussin' over the fire and spilin' yer purty smooth face with the heat. It suits Mary Ann; she's used to it; she's growed up to it like. There's nothin' like bein' fitted for the place a body's got to occupy. God knowed when He gin us Mary Ann she'd grow up to be jist what she is, and she's jist the gal He meant she should be, and we wouldn't alter her no way if we could by puttin' a hand on her; and He knowed when he gin' you to your father and mother that you'd be jist sich a smooth, purty little singin' bird as you be, and so we're all suited."

Maude smiled, but she felt that beneath the rude exterior and unfinished style of expression, there was a rich fund of good common-sense, and she looked upon the rough old farmer with feelings of profound respect. After tea he filled his pipe, and with Philip and Harry took a seat upon the piazza; not, however until he had offered to each of them the tobacco-chest, which contained, beside its treasure of the precious weed, half a dozen new clay

pipes, which they declined, assuring him that they never smoked.

Minnie had taken Maude to her own room, and Mary Ann retired to make her toilet for the evening. She was certainly very expeditious over it, for by the time the young ladies had smoothed their hair, and bathed their hands, and had a very little chat over their mutual subjects of interest, she rapped at their door and invited them to come into the garden, and gather a bouquet for the evening. They went as desired, and Philip and Harry joined them, each with knife in hand, to cut such flowers as they might select. The first one Mary Ann had cut was a large, full-blown damask rose, very beautiful and very fragrant, but by no means an appropriate ornament for the hair, to which purpose she intended devoting it. She put some fine white flowers with it, and, later in the evening, appeared with it coquettishly arranged in her lack-lustre locks. She wore a blue dress, in imitation of Minnie, declaring she thought "all light complected people" looked better in blue than any other color. While they were busy making up their bouquets, the evening company began to arrive. The first in order was Mr. 'Zekial Smith, who brought with him Miss Hannah Thompson. Mary Ann met them as they came up the walk, and

introduced them to her more early guests. Minnie had met Miss Thompson before, and that young lady greeted her with the warmth of an old friend, giving her a very audible kiss, very much to the envy of Mr. 'Zekial Smith.

The arrivals followed close upon each other, and in a very short space of time the parlor was more than comfortably filled.

Maude remembered what Mary Ann had told her with reference to the style of doing things "up their way," and was not at all surprised at being addressed by several gentlemen whose names had been announced upon their entrance, to whom she had had no further introduction. Minnie had met a number of the guests before; these she introduced to Maude, and there was no lack of conversation or amusement.

Soon after the company was assembled, the sound of a violin was heard proceeding from the piazza, in a state of most distressing discord. The usual amount of tuning brought it into tolerable harmony, and the performer struck up a lively measure that seemed to inspire the feet of the company with a peculiar activity, and they kept up such a lively beating of time as rendered the music almost inaudible. Mr. 'Zekial Smith was the first to seek a partner, and asked "Miss Evert" if she would give

him the pleasure of her company for the cotillion. She could not well decline; and casting a glance at Philip, who was just leading out Miss Sally Brown, they exchanged a smile which showed how novel the whole affair was to them. Now, Sally Brown was quite a belle, and more than one of her admirers cast envious glances at Philip as he claimed her hand for the dance. Harry and Mary Ann were partners, and Minnie went through the figures with Joel Jenkins, who always had a trembling in his left side when he was anywhere in her vicinity.

As the dancing proceeded the face of the musician became visible through the half-open window; it was *very* visible, for it was darker than the night, and almost stern in its expression of importance as he dictated the figures in a monotonous, sing-song sort of voice that was exceedingly amusing to the listeners. Old Caesar was one of the farm hands, and had been long enough in the family to have earned the honor of being considered a member of it. His head was white with the accumulated frosts of many winters, and his chief delight was in his violin, or *fiddle*, as *he* called it.

Mary Ann was in her element, and fairly outdid herself in the style and variety of the steps she employed in getting through the figures. Now Mary

Ann was Caesar's beau-ideal of perfection, and he thought if ever there was grace and elegance combined in one human being, that one was she. "See de move ob her!" he exclaimed, addressing himself to Mr. 'Zekial Smith, who stood near him watching the dancers through the open window. "If dat aint style, den dis nigger don't know nuffin about it. Talk about yer city gals, dey aint no whar when she shake a foot. Dey go creepin' 'bout as if dey was afeard of rumplin' dar fedders, but Miss Mar'an rack right frough, jis' like Massa Jinkins, gray pony. Shashay to yer pardners all; yah! yah! Massa Smit, it make dis ole darkie's heel tickle to see dat congelical young cretur going frough fings as she do." Massa Smit seemed to be similarly affected, for he went and claimed Mary Ann's hand for the next dance without delay.

Later in the evening, when the heat had made the exercise of dancing too great to be indulged in, Miss Sally Brown, who was wasting her most bewitching smiles upon Philip, proposed a game at "consequences." The city guests had never seen the play, and to them it was a great source of amusement. Miss Brown was selected to present each person present with some article suggested by her own imagination; thus, for instance, she whispered in Minnie's ear, "I will present you with Mr. Joel

Jenkins;" then to Maude, "I will present you with the brindle cow." To Philip she presented a lady's heart, the lady to be nameless; and to Mr. 'Zekial Smith a large gray mitten; and so on until the entire company had received an imaginary gift. Mr. Joel Jenkins was to follow up the presentations with advice as to what was best to do with the articles, presented, not knowing of course of what the present consisted. Thus, when he came to Minnie he advised her to throw it in the creek, and so on until every one had received advice with reference to their present. Finally Mary Ann whispered into each individual ear what would be the consequence of the presentation and advice; and this concluded, each person was to tell what he or she had been presented with, what advised to do with it, and what would be the consequence of the whole transaction. Minnie, having received the first present was called upon to commence, and peals of laughter followed the announcement that she had been presented with Mr. Jenkins, advised to throw him in the creek, and that in consequence of such proceeding Philip Stetson would ride home on a broomstick. Maude was presented with the brindle-cow, advised to give her a clean pocket-handkerchief, and tie her shoes up tidy to make her ankles small; and the consequence would be that she

—the brindle-cow—would go out riding with 'Zekial Smith in his new wagon, and that he would propose to her and be accepted before they reached home. Philip was presented with a lady's heart, the lady to be nameless; advised to make a pin-cushion of it; and the consequence would be that it would turn out to be a large roll of butter. 'Zekial Smith was presented with a large gray mitten, advised to hide it in the hay-mow; and the consequence would be that its ghost would come to him in the night and make his hair stand on end; and so on through the whole company, until Harry, being the last to speak, laughingly disclosed that he had been presented with Mary Ann's pet cat, advised to give her a kiss and dance the Highland fling with her; and the consequence would be that she would make him a good wife, and they would "live in peace, and die in a pot of grease."

The hour was waxing late, and the moon had come up to light them home, so the company dispersed, each one bearing with them an especial memory of the occasion. Maude, Philip, and Harry set it down as a novelty not soon to be forgotten, and the next morning an extra half-hour was spent over the breakfast table, relating and listening to the transactions of the evening. Even 'Elma's sad

face lightened up with something more than a smile when Harry described the game at "consequences."

They were happy days for our young friends at the lake; peacefully, quietly happy to 'Elma; blissfully, lovingly happy to Maude and Philip. They understood each other now, and though no declaration had been made, they knew instinctively each the other's heart; and ever as they wandered by the lake-side, or glided on its rippling surface, or sat silently in the trembling moonlight, or breathed their hearts' pure feelings out in soft, delicious music, there came to them that unmistakable token of heaven-born affection,—a perfect restfulness of spirit.

CHAPTER XX.

NINA.

HARRY saw it all, and sighed as he wondered if any one would ever love him as he knew Philip was loved. He thought he knew of one who was capable of such affection, but would it ever be lavished upon him? His heart was full of doubts, and when he saw how like a sister 'Elma received all his numerous attentions, and how she looked into his eyes with the unfaltering confidence of a friend, without a tint deepening on her cheek or an eyelid drooping beneath his glances, he felt that he was only as a brother to her *yet*, whatever the future might disclose.

The two weeks that Philip spent at the lake flew by so rapidly that he thought it impossible that the time had really gone by until letters from the city reminded him that such was indeed the case.

The evening before his departure it was proposed that the young people should take a moonlight ride

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to the lesser lake, Glenida: accordingly, just as the sun was setting, the four saddle horses were brought up, and the little party, ready equipped, stood upon the piazza ready for a start. 'Elma had been an apt scholar, and under Harry's instruction had become a really fine rider. She mounted her horse with as much ease and assurance as though she had been practising for years instead of weeks.

"All ready!" called out Harry, as he placed his foot in the stirrup, and away they went, soon quickening their pace into a gallop that brought the color to the cheek, and the light of pleasurable excitement to the eye.

They were not long in reaching the place of destination, for the ponies made lively work of it. The air was cool and bracing, and made one long for excitement, or rapid motion, and so they sped along perfectly absorbed in the wild beauty of the scenery and the excitement of vigorous exercise. The moon had risen when they reached the little lake. Maude and Philip were slightly in advance, and as they halted upon its margin Philip drew his horse up close to Maude's and reached out his hand to her as if in greeting: she instinctively extended hers; he took it, and, leaning forward, looked into her face as though he would read there all his future destiny. What he saw there we cannot pretend to say; we

only know that Maude's hand remained unresistingly in his, and that he murmured, in a voice low and musical, these words:

"Spirit of love, spirit of bliss,
Thy holiest time is the moonlight hour,
And there never was moonlight so sweet as this."

Their companions joined them as he uttered the last words. Harry dismounted and stood patting his horse's neck, and speaking to him in those low, tender, caressing tones which seem to exercise such influence over intelligent animals, when the bushes were suddenly put aside, and a human figure darted across the path just in front of 'Elma's horse. The animal reared, and would have galloped off with his fair rider, had not Harry seized the rein and spoken to him in a voice that calmed his fears and restored him to his usual equanimity. This done, he looked about for the object that had occasioned the alarm, and discovered a woman standing in the shadow of one of the great trees whose branches drooped over the lake. She was a wild, fantastically dressed creature, a half-Indian gypsy woman, who was known to the settlers for miles around as a pretended fortune-teller. Maude had heard of but never seen her, and she made up her mind at once that it was the gypsy Nina who stood before them.

"What are you doing here?" asked Harry, rather sharply. "The young lady might have been killed through your carelessness."

Nina—for it was she—drew herself up with great dignity, and stepped forth into the broad moonlight. She placed one of her small, brown hands over her eyes, and, looking from beneath it, fixed her gaze full upon 'Elma's face. She stood thus for a moment, a perfect queen in appearance, then turning to Harry, she said,—

"Your pretty lady will never be killed by a horse; it is not in her fate." Then, assuming a sterner voice, she said, "What are *you* doing here? This is Nina's home, here 'neath the blue sky she sleeps till the stars go out: she is at home. Why are not you there in your fine mansion?"

Harry saw that his tone had offended her, and assuming a more gentle one, he said,—

"Forgive me if I spoke harshly; I was frightened; I did not mean to offend you?"

"Who is it that asks the gypsy Nina to forgive him? Your people never use that word to mine I will tell you, young man,—because your voice is as the rippling water to the poor gypsy's ear,—that harm will never come to yon fair maiden when you are nigh: the stars tell me so, and they never deceive as men do; and when they look into the

water it is all pure; there are no dark thoughts such as men have when they bend to see their wicked faces in the pure stream."

She stepped forward, and would have strode away, but Harry detained her, saying, —

"Come, read us our fate, Nina;" and taking some silver coin from his purse, he held it toward her. It sparkled and glittered in the moonlight, and Nina's eyes grew larger and brighter as she looked upon it. She stepped nearer to him, and taking his hand, she turned it this way and that, examining it in the most minute manner, murmuring all the while in a low, monotonous tone. At length, dropping his hand, and clasping her own, she turned her face toward the heavens, and spoke thus: —

"Thou shalt have long life; thou shalt have friends, and gold, and honors. Thou shalt pass over much water—the great ocean, and its waves shall never harm thee; but when thou art in the far country a dark shadow shall creep over the mighty waters, and come to rest with thee, and thou wilt remember that Nina hath spoken it."

She darted away through the bushes, and was out of sight in an instant. The little party looked at each other in surprise for a moment, and then Philip broke out into a merry laugh that rang

cheerfully out upon the evening air, and echo taking up the sound, it came back to them clear and ringing as the original itself. There was another echo of that evening that came long afterwards, when the dark shadow had started upon its journey and was seeking out Harry in a foreign land.

"It is too bad!" said Maude. "I thought she would have spoken to each of us. I never have had my fortune told; have you, Daisy?"

"No: there were some gypsies in the mountains at Cornwall for a time, and one poor old creature *pretended* to tell fortunes. I met her in the woods one day, and was greatly frightened at encountering her in that lonely place; but she seemed quite harmless, and when she spoke to me her voice was so pleasant, I ceased to be afraid of her. 'Let me tell your fortune, little darling,' she said, attempting to take my hand. 'No,' I replied, 'I've no money.' I knew she expected money for her information. 'No matter,' said she; 'let me look at your hand.' She took it, and began muttering something that I could not understand, further than that I was to beware of a dark complected young man, and not go sleigh-riding on First-Day evenings, and there was something about a well. I had a passion for looking down our well, — which was very deep, — to see the stars reflected in the dark water in the

day-time. My poor mother used to caution me, when she would see me amusing myself in this way, and I thought the old gypsy referred to this. Her words broke me of the habit, and I have often smiled when I have remembered what confidence I had in her."

"This seems just the place for having one's fortune told. She has spoiled a pretty little bit of romance by going so suddenly," said Maude.

"Yes," replied Philip, "I should like to take a little peep into futurity this evening. I am quite disappointed at not being able to do so."

Maude blushed, — *a very little*, — for she thought she knew one subject of interest upon which Philip would like some information.

Harry stood tapping his foot with his whip, until Philip addressed him.

"Well," he said, in reply to Philip's question of how he liked the fortune Nina had read him, "the gold, and the friends, and the honors, are all pleasant enough; but I do not like that creeping shadow she told about. Ugh! what a voice she has got; I wish she had not told me about the shadow. I hate creeping things. I have no faith in what she says, but it makes the chills creep over me to think how the poor crazy creature looked, standing there in the moonlight. Come, let's have

a gallop," and springing lightly into the saddle, he turned away from the lake, up into the highway, closely followed by his companions, who were all laughing heartily at the idea of his being in any way disturbed by what Nina had said to him.

They galloped on for a little way, and then, as if of one accord, they fell into a more moderate gait. Maude and Philip were silent. This was Philip's last evening at the lake, and he had not realized, until this last hour, how very happy had been the days spent in wandering so unrestrainedly with his heart's idol. Maude was silent, without really knowing that she was so. To be near *him*, to breathe the same air, to listen to the many voices of the night — the whispering leaves, the gurgling brook, and the myriad insect voices that wake up nature's nightly concert, was happiness enough, and words would only have disturbed the restfulness that was settling so beautiful into her young life.

Elma and Harry were almost silent too; only exchanging a few words now and then as they slackened their pace at some necessary points of the road; but how different were their feelings from those of their companions. *They* were not anticipating a separation on the morrow; but for the *others*, it was as though a leaf were to be

turned in a pleasant book that we are reading: there was to be an interruption, and the page that had glided along almost without punctuation was to be suddenly brought to a conclusion by a period, and afterward there would be marks denoting a lapse of time. Thus would it be with Maude and Philip after the morrow: there would be a blank, with only here and there a token to denote that time had passed.

The morrow came—morning and noon had gone by—the period had been written, the leaf was turned, and Maude was vainly striving to become interested in the new chapter. It was like taking up a problem in mathematics directly after having luxuriated in the rhetorical beauties of an absorbing romance.

The day had been unusually fine, but as the evening approached small copperish clouds might be seen scattered here and there, varied occasionally by heavy leaden masses, lying so low that one could trace the folding and rolling up of the vapor as they floated away to the west, and heaped themselves up as though bombarding the sun's pathway to his nightly destination. At twilight they had ranged themselves in formidable array, and found voice in low, solemn rolls of thunder. The air was full of tempest, and produced that peculiar de-

pression of spirits, and nervous excitement that is always felt before a violent, thunder-storm. Maude and 'Elma sat at the window looking with admiration, not unmingled with fear, at the wildly driving clouds, and the dark, perturbed waters of the lake. Harry had gone out in the afternoon for a stroll, and had not yet returned, and they were watching, and wishing that he might come in before the storm should burst in its wild fury.

As yet, there had not been a drop of rain, and the air was hot, and dry as the breath of a furnace.

As the darkness closed in, Harry sprang lightly up the steps of the piazza, singing a fragment of a favorite song, and the two young girls darted out to meet him before he had time to enter the parlor where they had been sitting. In her joy at his having escaped the storm 'Elma caught his hand in both hers, and exclaimed, in the warmth and sincerity of her heart,—

“Oh, Harry, we have been so anxious about thee, —I am *so* glad thee has come!”

Harry felt his sister's hand upon his shoulder, but he did not hear her words of welcome; he *knew* that Maude loved him. His face was turned towards 'Elma, and the hand she had taken trembled, as no fear of death, or danger, could have

made it do. Harry was brave, and would have faced the cannon's mouth unflinchingly in any cause of right or honor; but there is not in all this wide world a heart so firm as to stand unmoved and listen to such words as 'Elma had just spoken, from the woman it loves, when there is a doubt of that love being returned. Harry's heart stood still for an instant, as though it were blissful to have life and time pause for a space, *just there*; but even as they stood, the clock ticked on, and 'Elma's words had floated away with the moment; the one, to join the infinitesimals that make up eternity, the other, to be registered upon a living tablet, written in the very drops of life.

Taking an arm of each Harry paced up and down the piazza, laughing at their apprehensions of danger, and telling them that, to him, there was nothing so grandly beautiful as a thunder-storm among the mountains.

"I will admit all that," said Maude. "I do not by any means underrate the sublimity of the thing, but to-night I feel a singular apprehensiveness of danger, as though something terrible was about to occur."

"Do not let us anticipate evil," said 'Elma. "I think it is the tempest in the air that has made thee a little nervous; let's go and have some music;

there is nothing so soothing and comforting to me, when I feel troubled, as music. If I could play and sing as thou dost, I should feel as though I possessed a talisman for drowning care, an elixir for all the lesser ills of life. Come, Maude, let's have some music."

They turned to enter the house, and as they did so a vivid flash lighted up the whole firmament, and the landscape glowed more vividly than in the noonday sun. Before the brightness had passed away, a peal of thunder followed that seemed to make the very universe tremble.

"Oh, was not it terrific!" said Maude, clinging more closely to her brother's arm.

"That is not the word, Maude: you should say sublime," he replied, placing his arm around her and drawing her into the hall. We must serve you as they do timid children,—put you where you cannot see it, though we cannot prevent your hearing. I did not tell you that I met that poor crazy gypsy girl as I was coming through the wood! I suppose some friendly tree is the only shelter *she* has from the storm."

"Did thee speak with her?" inquired 'Elma.

"No: I was travelling very briskly to reach shelter before the rain came on, and she seemed to take no notice of me, so I passed her by without speak-

ing. She had her apron full of straws, and seemed to be weaving them into something like a crown. Perhaps she fancies herself a queen to-day. She would make a splendid gypsy queen; there is dignity in her every movement."

While they had been speaking they had entered the parlor, where Mr. and Mrs. Everet were sitting, and Harry began telling his mother of Maude's groundless fears and terror of the storm. The daylight was now quite gone, and the rain was coming down most generously. The wind rose as the day died out, and the thunder and lightning were really terrific, notwithstanding Harry's admiration of them. Peal after peal followed flash after flash, with scarce an instant's intermission. At length Maude threw herself on the sofa and hid her face in the pillows, that she might not see the spectral figures of the branches cast in upon the wall, and revealed by the lightning's glare. They seemed to her to beckon emphatically for her to come out, and the disposition to do so was almost irresistible, notwithstanding the violence of the storm. She lay in this way but a few moments, the other occupants of the room sitting in perfect silence, when there came a terrific crash and blaze at the same instant, as though a cannon had been discharged in the very room where they were sitting. Mr. Everet

and 'Elma were near the window, and both were attracted to the same object. A large fire-ball seemed to be rolling along the piazza, and showed how fearfully near the bolt had fallen. The thunder was not continuous, as it had been before, but rent the air with one stunning burst, and then ceased, leaving a dead, fearful silence. The wind and rain ceased for the moment, as though that dread shock had distracted the very laws of nature, and the whole universe paused and trembled. In that instant of fearful silence there rose upon the air a cry of terror, and then one low, despairing moan, as of a heart rent by the last agony.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE STORM, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

HARRY started up now, fully alive to the alarm his sister had felt, and was as ready as she to exclaim, "How terrible." Maude had risen from the sofa when the cry fell upon her ear, and, pointing to the door, exclaimed, in breathless impatience,—

"Father—Harry—quick, quick!"

Elma, pale as marble, went to her, and throwing her arms round her, begged her to be composed.

"Oh, Daisy! I never heard anything so fearful; it is ringing in my very heart."

Whilst they were speaking, Mr. Everet and Harry had obtained a lantern and gone out upon the piazza, expecting to find they scarce knew what. They tried to make themselves believe it was a dog that had uttered that piercing scream, but the sound was all too human, and they dreaded the disclosure their investigation must bring.

"There is nothing here," said Mr. Everet, turn-

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ing the lantern this way and that, in order to throw the light as strongly as possible through the gloom, for it was dark as Erebus, and the rain coming down, not in drops, but liquid sheets, drenching every out-door thing, and filling the lake until it had quite overflowed its bounds, and looked in its swollen dimensions like an angry river, rolling and tossing in the wild fury of the storm. As he spake, the heavens lighted up once more with a broad red glare, and then all was dark again. It was enough: Harry had discovered a human figure, and springing from the piazza exclaimed,—

"Come! it is here, lying in the path, under the old elm-tree."

Mr. Everet followed as best he might, for Harry had seized the lantern, and was rushing down the path before his father had fairly comprehended the meaning of his words. Guided by the light which Harry carried, he soon stood beside him under the old elm-tree, where lay the figure of a woman, prostrate upon the earth. She had fallen forward, and her face was turned to the ground, but Harry did not need to see the countenance to recognize the victim. A gay blanket was wrapped around her shoulders, and a rude crown of plaited straws, ornamented with feathers, was set upon the head, and securely fastened by long thorns, pinioning it to

the heavy braids of raven hair. Harry put down the lantern and gently raised the head to make sure he had not been mistaken in his first convictions as to who it was that lay before him.

"Who is it! do you know her?" asked Mr. Everet.

"Yes, it is that poor half Indian gypsy-girl—Nina, they called her. I passed her in the wood this afternoon as I was hurrying to escape the storm," replied Harry. "I believe she is dead: take the lantern, and I will carry her to the house." Suiting the action to the word, he lifted her as easily as if she had been a child, for she was very slight, and Harry in the excitement of the moment could have taken a much heavier burden.

The parties in the drawing-room followed the glimmer of light shed by the lantern with fearful expectancy; and when at length it turned toward the house they could bear suspense no longer, but went and stood at the open door in order to have a moment's earlier information.

"It is the figure of a woman," said Elma; "Harry is carrying her. Who could be out such a night as this? surely no one who has a shelter would brave this storm."

Harry bore his burthen along slowly, and as he neared the house he called out cheerily, "Don't be

frightened; perhaps she is only stunned. Get some hot brandy and water, and 'Elma, find a blanket; we must get off these wet things." Harry felt very sure, even while speaking these cheerful words, that neither reviving spirits nor fleecy blankets would ever warm those cold limbs into life again; but he felt that the best thing for Maude and 'Elma would be to give them something to do, and so let the knowledge break gradually upon them that Nina was dead. They both ran off to do so as they were bidden, without ascertaining who it was that Harry was carrying, quite forgetting their own fears in the hope of being of service in that hour of need.

"Let's have a pillow, mother," said Harry, placing the lifeless form upon the carpet. "Oh, heaven; I fear she is dead: it is the gypsy Nina you heard us talk of, mother."

"That blow struck her to the heart," said Mr. Everet. "See! this left side is scared and blackened. I doubt if she will ever breathe again."

Maude and 'Elma executed their orders with rapid hands, and as 'Elma entered the room, bringing a warm, soft blanket, Maude was at her side with the brandy and water, hot, sweet, and strong. Both paused, for an instant only, and looking at each other exclaimed in one breath, "*Nina!*" Oh, how strong Maude was, now that there was some-

thing to do; and how fearlessly 'Elma took the cold hand in hers, chafing and folding it between her own, hoping to impart a portion of her own vitality to the lifeless veins that should never know the warmth of circulation again.

Long and earnestly they strove to resuscitate the inanimate form, but not a single heart-throb, or fluttering pulse, rewarded their efforts; but, instead of the returning glow of life, there settled slowly over the brown face, the ashen hue and unmistakable expression of death. From the left shoulder, and down along the side, there ran a small, black line, and the skin, scorched and shrivelled, showed where the electricity had taken effect.

"It is no use," said Mr. Everet; "we can do no more."

"Oh, do not say she is dead!" cried Maude. "It is so terrible to think she is dead."

"It is no more terrible than true, my child," replied her father, spreading his handkerchief over the stiffening features of the corpse. "She must be left just here until the coroner comes. It will not be possible to send for him to-night: it is not fit for man or beast to travel five miles through this storm, and he is full five miles away. You had better not remain here any longer," he said, turning toward his wife, who was standing with

an arm around each one of the young girls, who were weeping bitterly. "Harry and I will see that every thing here is right; and at day-break, Pedro will go for the coroner. You had better take the girls to your room, mother. I expect neither they nor you will sleep much, and you had better be together. I will share Harry's room;" and kissing them fondly, he bade them good-night, and they retired to *rest*, but not to sleep.

The hours passed on slowly, *so* slowly that Maude and 'Elma thought the day would never dawn. Towards morning Mrs. Everet slept for a short time, but her companions never dozed for an instant, but lay hour after hour, uneasily watching and waiting for the day.

The storm had ceased at midnight, and the morning broke rosy and beautiful. At the earliest dawn they heard Pedro stir, and presently the clatter of horses' feet moving rapidly away assured them that he had already set out upon his melancholy errand. They drew closer to each other, and weary and exhausted with excitement and the night's watching, they both fell asleep. In the course of an hour and a half Pedro returned, and with him, the coroner and those necessary to transact the business upon which he had been summoned.

A very short time sufficed to decide that Nina had

come to her death by a sudden dispensation of Providence, and the man of office was about to take his leave, when it suddenly occurred to him that the girl would have to be buried, and information must be given the authorities to that effect.

"I will send the poor-master down, if you like, sir," he called out to Mr. Everet, after having mounted his horse.

"Thank you," replied the old gentleman; "it will save me some trouble, and I shall feel obliged to you, if you will do so. Please have him come as soon as possible; my wife and daughters are quite upset by this sad affair."

"Aye, aye, sir," replied the man, and galloped off, feeling that he had done his duty as every man of office ought.

At eight o'clock the family assembled at breakfast, and Mr. Everet informed them that the coroner had been, and that the proper persons would soon be there to take charge of Nina's remains; and proposed that they should go out for a drive immediately after breakfast, in order to escape the necessary confusion attendant upon the removal of the body. Mrs. Everet consented to go, but Maude and 'Elma said nothing; and when Mr. Everet turned to them and asked if they approved of the measure, they looked at each other as if to decide

which should speak; and then Maude moved nearer to her father, and stealing her soft hand into his, she said,—

"We have a favor to ask, papa,—'Elma and I,—one I think you will be very ready to grant. We want you to ask those people who come to take her away to let us have her buried among the trees down by the lake. We have been talking about it, and we think it would be so beautiful for her to have a grave in that quiet, shady spot, near to the waters that were named by her people. Will you ask them, papa?"

Mr. Everet's eyes filled with tears as he listened to her words; it was such a delicate, womanly feeling that had prompted them; and 'Elma, fearing he meditated a refusal, drew nearer, and, looking earnestly into his face, added her entreaties to Maude's:

"Thee *will* ask them, Friend Everet? We should so like to plant some flowers on her grave, and make it beautiful before we leave this lovely spot."

"Yes," replied Mr. Everet, "I will ask them. I suppose there is a place of burial for such as she, but no doubt they will be willing to leave her here, if we wish it."

In the space of a couple of hours the authorities came to take away all that remained of the poor,

friendless girl, and when Mr. Everet presented the wishes of his daughters, and added to them his own, they were very willing to grant them, and the man who was lifting the rude coffin from the wagon paused for an instant to say that he "reckoned the Friends wouldn't never make no trouble about it," and uttered a low, satisfied chuckle at his own gross attempt at wit.

They had brought such grave-clothes as the town allowed, and with the assistance of the two female servants, she was made decent for the grave; then the two men went out to prepare a receptacle for the remains.

"Where would the young ladies like her laid?" asked the elder of the two men: "please show us at once; we have no time to spare."

Harry knew the spot, and went out with them to give directions.

While this was being done, Mrs. Everet, with Maude and 'Elma, went in to look at the "poor unfortunate." The servant had just smoothed back her long dark hair from the sun-burned brow; the shroud was white and pure-looking, though very, very poor and coarse, and the hands were peacefully folded over her breast. The countenance had lost its expression of terror, and in its place the shadow of a smile had settled.

"How happy she looks," said 'Elma as she placed a pure white rose between the lifeless fingers.

"I feel no fear of being near her now," said Maude, scattering blossoms of the fragrant heliotrope over her bosom. "Was not it a strange pre-sentiment of evil that I felt last night? I can almost fancy that the death-angel was walking, unseen, among us, filling the atmosphere with his dread presence, and striking terror to my heart in every breath of it that I inhaled.

When they had discharged this last delicate office of kindness, and placed a wreath of wild flowers upon the poor coffin, they covered the face, and went away—*reverently*—feeling how frail and uncertain a thing is human life. It took but a short time to make the grave ready, and then they came to carry her away. When they had screwed the coffin and lifted it out on the piazza and down the steps, Mr. and Mrs. Everet, Harry, Maude, and 'Elma followed it to its last resting-place, and stood until the grave was heaped and smoothed, and then they went away, silently—leaving her there alone 'mid the wild beauties of nature that she so much loved in her brief lifetime. And there sleeps Nina, the wild Indian gypsy maiden, with not one of her own kind to lament her untimely fate. A stranger and wanderer upon the face of the earth,

she lived and died alone. None knew from where she came, or why she lingered about in the wild places surrounding the beautiful lake of Mahopac. It may be that she fancied in the wild superstition of her nature, that the spirit of her forefathers lingered there to protect and guide her. Her proclivities were purely Indian, and she felt all the bitterness manifested by that wronged and down-trodden race. Methinks I can see in the silvery moonlight a swarthy band of warriors stealing out from among the shadows of the great trees, to gather 'round her grave and perform their extravagant demonstrations of sorrow. They come like armed men; but as I look they fade away, and their shadows, one by one, glide on the moonlight out upon the waters of the lake and disappear. Thus have they in reality faded away from among us. Poor, wronged Indian! Is there not one, among all the shining lights who stand in high places and plead for our oppressed African brethren, to speak a word in God's name for thee?

CHAPTER XXII.

FANNIE'S FLIRTATIONS.

WHILE we have been rustivating among green fields and beneath shady trees, listening to babbling brooks, and chirping crickets playing at hide-and-seek among the long grass, our other characters have not been idle. Cousin Catharine, Hope, and 'Lidie have been luxuriating among the highlands, in that little hiding place of beauty so cosily nestled among the green mountains—Cornwall. Fannie Bruce has been making herself notorious at Rockaway. Admirers surround her on every side, and she is flattered and petted to her heart's content. Oh! never let us say that beauty is a worthless gift, or lightly to be prized. Fannie is a flat contradiction to any such theory; for, notwithstanding she is not possessed of one noble or generous quality of heart or mind, she is the observed of all observers, the most admired and sought after of all the crowd assembled at that fashionable watering place. Her mother is no less

flattered and delighted with these attentions than is Fannie herself. Her father—good easy going man—accustomed to thinking everything was right when his wife and daughter were pleased, took but little notice of what was going on; and left the management of Fannie and her flirtations entirely to her mother, and Fannie, unaccustomed to restraint, took the reins from the maternal hands and directed the course of her own destiny. Whither does she drive—along the pleasant ways of wisdom, whose “paths are paths of peace?” or through the labyrinths of sensual pleasure, which lead down to the gloomy valley of regret? We shall see.

Among her admirers there was a gay, fascinating young man of twenty-two, who prized nothing in woman so highly as a beautiful face. Fannie was his beau-ideal of a perfect woman. Her figure he thought “*magnificent*,” her eyes were “*ravishing*,” her hair—he declared to a bar-room companion—was a golden chain to lead him whither she would; “and, by Jove,” he added, “she must be mine at all risks.”

“Then you must manage the thing smartly,” replied the other, “for Lenox has his eye upon her, and I have caught him looking awfully sentimental two or three times when I have met them walking together. It would be his way to go and talk to the

old folks about it before he had spoken a syllable to the girl. Now, if you take my advice, you will make it right with her first, and my life upon it you will be the winner; for she twists the old man and woman round her fingers just as she pleases;—just as she will *you* when she is my lady Stanton; eh, Fred?” and he gave the languishing lover a thrust in the side that nearly upset him, and repeated: “Mrs. Stanton, Mrs. Fannie Stanton, my dear Fan. How does it sound Fred,—like one of the things that is to be?”

“What a nonsensical dog you are, Sam!” drawled Fannie’s victim; “there is no sentiment or feeling about you.”

“Ha, ha!” the idea of Fred Stanton talking about sentiment and feeling. What do you think Nellie Prichard would say to that my boy? The last time I saw her she looked as though her lover had not much ‘*sentiment*’ or feeling.”

“Sh!” cautioned Fred; “not a word of her in this place;” and after a moment’s pause, “Poor Nell! it was her own fault. If the girls *will* fall in love with me, I can’t help it; but really, Sam, I’m in earnest this time.”

“We shall see. Good-morning, Fred. I will leave you to revel in the luxuries of ‘*sentiment*’

and feeling.' Hang my buttons, but that's a good one! it 'beats all my first wife's relations.'"

Fred Stanton really thought he loved Fannie. He certainly *admired* her more than any girl he had ever met before, and when we have said this, we have said *all*; for he was not capable of any such sentiment as genuine affection, and in this respect he and Fannie were well matched.

James Lenox was a bachelor of thirty,—an honorable, sterling man; as decided a contrast to Fred Stanton as one could well imagine. He had not gone thus far through life unscathed by the boy archer, but circumstances had combined to keep him single until the hey-day of youth had passed; and Fannie was not a little flattered when the elegant Mr. Lenox, for whose preference the young ladies assembled at Rockaway were sighing in vain, showed very decided marks of admiration for her; and in the early part of their acquaintance she certainly managed her cards well. She felt just a shadow of restraint in the presence of that dark, dignified man, and this was very becoming to her, and made her very fascinating; for he gave her credit for being very modest, and very artless, not knowing, in his infatuation, that this seeming simplicity was the very perfection of art. When it suited her purpose, or would gain a point, she could

be amiability's very self; and she was looked upon by her companions with no little envy when they saw how devotedly she was attended by James Lenox.

It was not that flippant, mean-nothing sort of attention so general among ladies and gentlemen assembled at a fashionable watering-place, but a tender, respectful deference to her every wish. They walked together, drove together, danced together; in fact where one was seen there was sure to be seen the other; and when he talked upon lofty and elevating subjects, lending the rich tones of his manly voice to the inspiration, Fannie would listen as though her whole soul were wrapped in the subject; and when he paused, expecting a response, she would cast an admiring glance from her beautiful eyes, and sigh in her most captivating tones, "'Tis so delicious to hear you, my own voice disturbs me after you have been speaking for a time. It will be like a beautiful dream to remember it all when the summer is over, and I have gone back to my books, and the dry lessons, and Miss Willson's sour face. Go on please, I cannot bear you should leave off yet. I think I might get to be a very sensible girl if you would talk to me in this way every day," and then the thought of the utter insincerity of her words would bring a flush to her

cheeks that made her very captivating, and James Lenox, with all his knowledge of the world, was being deceived most effectually.

When this had been going on for about a month, Fred Stanton and his friend Sam Eaton arrived, and took up their quarters at the house where the Bruces and James Lenox were stopping. The conversation which we have related as having taken place between these two young men occurred about a week after their arrival. They had made Fannie's acquaintance, and Fred had danced with her more than once, and she found him very agreeable,—in fact a young man quite suited to her taste; lively, witty and stylish,—what we would call in *these* days rather "*fast*." Fannie's father was aware that Mr. Lenox admired his daughter, and approved most heartily of their intimacy, and had said as much to her mother, who remarked with a satisfied and complacent smile, "Fannie seems quite to have bewitched him. I suppose it would be a very eligible match. Fannie tells me she is expecting every day that he will propose. He is quite devoted to her."

"Well, he can have my consent," continued her father. "There is not such another match at Rock-away, and has not been this season, as he would be for Fan. I hope she will not make a fool of

herself with that young Stanton. She seems to be flirting about with him a good deal."

"I do not think she will do anything of that kind," replied Mrs. Bruce. "Lenox is a trifle too serious, and, it may be, a few years too old for her; but I think his means and position would overbalance these difficulties. Fannie is pretty ambitious, and to become Mrs. James Lenox would be no slight achievement."

"Well, I hope it will all go right," replied the satisfied father; "but you had better tell her not to go too far with Stanton: the other might get jealous, you know."

As he finished speaking, Fannie entered the room, looking beautiful as an houri. Her countenance was glowing with health; the exercise of riding on horseback had given her a fine color, and her dark, well-fitting riding-habit set off her fine figure to great advantage. She had taken off her cap and held it in one hand, while in the other she held her gold-mounted riding whip, with which she was giving her dress little short, angry taps, plainly showing that something had disturbed the equilibrium of her temper. At that moment she would have made an admirable "Lady Gay Spanker." Not deigning to notice her parents, and tossing her cap and whip upon the sofa, she

threw herself into an easy chair, and it was very evident that there was a storm ahead.

"Hey-day!" exclaimed her father, "what has vexed my lady-bird, now?"

"*Lady-bird*, indeed," replied the angry girl, tossing her head; "that's *just the way*. Everybody treats me as though I were a child. I wonder when I shall be old enough to know how to behave myself? There's Mr. Lenox, too, just because Fred Stanton waved his handkerchief and kissed his hand to me as we passed him on the road, has been lecturing and talking of propriety ever since. If there is anything I *do* hate, it is a man who can't bear to have his lady friends look at or speak to any one but himself. It's jealousy, — that's what it is; and if Mr. Lenox expects I am going to confine my entire attention to him, he will find himself very much mistaken. I'll teach him that I shall do as I please; and if he don't like it he can keep his displeasure to himself, and not go talking to me as though I were a baby, and required his directions as to what my conduct should be."

She had worked herself up into quite a nervous state of excitement, and after having delivered herself of the above amiable sentiments, she burst into tears, and wept as though she were really one

of the most injured innocents in the world. Mr. Bruce looked at his wife, and seeing what turn things were taking, left the room without speaking a word. Mrs. Bruce knew, by experience, that the shortest way out of the trouble was to say nothing. She sat quietly rocking herself to and fro, and Fannie cried and scolded to her heart's content. When she was quite satisfied, she rose and took a survey of herself in the mirror.

"Great fool that I am," she said, "to let him make me cry! My eyes are so swollen and red that I shall not be fit to go into the parlor this evening; and Fred Stanton has my promise for the first dance. I'll go, just to vex him. Fred knows enough not to meddle with other people's business if he is not so awfully wise as some other people. These literary, intellectual men are always tyrants, and so conceited — it's quite disgusting. I don't believe I like literary men. I have made up my mind that Mr. Lenox is too old for me: he would always be lecturing me and I should not put up with his interference, I *know* I shouldn't. I prefer some one nearer my own age, whose heart is a trifle warmer than his. He can select from the old maids who assemble in the parlor every evening to gossip, and who think him such a *love* of

a man." She laughed, a bitter, sarcastic laugh, such as we sometimes hear from those who are soured and disappointed with the world, but seldom from such beautiful young lips as hers.

While Fannie had been pouting, as we have seen, James Lenox had been sitting alone in the declining sunlight, pulling up and twisting little tufts of grass, which he scattered here and there without any apparent consciousness that his hands were employed. He was looking very thoughtful, and from thinking of the present his mind had gradually, little by little, glided back — back to the days of his early youth. Fannie and the annoyances of the day were all forgotten as he lived again, for a brief space, in the light of the dove eyes that beamed upon him then. That light had been quenched years ago, leaving all his future saddened by the shadow that fell upon his heart from one grassy grave, in the old churchyard of his native village.

When the sun was gone, and the twilight was deepening, his hands had ceased their work, and he sat quietly living once again the olden time, and the blades of grass lay withered and dead at his feet, like the hopes whose shadows he was calling up from the *long ago*.

Fannie had taken particular pains to make herself beautiful for the evening; and truth to tell, she had succeeded to a charm, as more than one admiring glance very plainly declared as she entered, and glided gracefully through the well-filled drawing-room.

Fred Stanton was at her side in a moment, and expressed a hope that she had not forgotten her promise for the first quadrille.

"Not I, indeed," she replied; "I have an excellent memory."

"I do not doubt it, but I thought some greater favorite might supersede me, and I wished to remind you of your promise ere it were too late."

Fannie felt the force of his remark, which consisted more in his manner than in the words he had used, and rewarded him with one of her sweetest smiles. She did not doubt but Mr. Lenox was worshipping at a distance, and the smile was given as much to excite his jealousy, and bring him to her side, as in answer to Fred Stanton's words of compliment. This time she failed in her purpose, for hour after hour passed, and still he came not. She had made more than one tour of the room upon the arm of her new-made admirer, peering into every group, and sending searching glances

into all the corners, without discovering the object of her thoughts.

Ah! Fannie, cold as thou art, there is in a hidden corner of thy heart, unknown to thyself, it may be, one warm, womanly sentiment, of which thou shalt never know until it startles thee with those saddest of all sad words, "*Too late! too late!*"

She had danced and coquetted to her heart's content with all her admirers, and the evening was well-nigh spent; still there was something wanting. "A something bright had vanished from her life; she knew not what it was, nor where it went."

As she was taking "just one more dance" with Fred Stanton, she glanced toward the open window, and there met her view the figure she had all the evening been seeking in vain. Then there came over her an injured feeling: she had been slighted; a whole evening had been passed without his coming to her; he should pay for it, that he should; and she danced, and smiled, and chatted with a gayety even beyond herself.

Ah! little did she know how he had been looking all these moonlight hours, upon a face and form as fair as hers, who, years ago, had given him her warm young heart to keep, until death should

them part. Ah! little did she know how that parting had come all too soon; and as he stood there looking in upon the merry dancers, the faded flowers of memory were trailing sadly over all his heart.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOME AGAIN.

THE Everet Cottage, at Lake Mahopac, is deserted. It stands, in the bright September sun, with its closed shutters and noiseless rooms, like a sentinel, to guard the lovely grass hard by, which had been made beautiful with flowers before the family returned to their city home.

Cousin Catharine's heart was delighted when she took 'Elma in her arms, and saw that returning health was giving a rosy tint to the cheeks that had been so pale when they parted; and Levi, as he took her hand, was so surprised at the change that he almost forgot to give her a word of welcome, and stood looking into her face so long, silently, that she became quite embarrassed; and Hope declared that she had brought a spell from the mountains, and that Levi would never be able to speak so long as he stood holding her hand.

When Joe, who had opened the door for 'Elma, told Judy that, "Miss Almy had cummed hum,"

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that important personage in the household tied on her "*other aporn*," and twisted her last new "*hankesher*" into a tasty turban, and ascended to the drawing-room to give her welcome, feeling that the hospitalities of the establishment had not been properly dispensed until this had been gone through with.

She rapped; and being told to enter, she opened the door a very little way, and putting in her head asked,

"Did anybody ring?"

Cousin Catherine knew for what she had come, and, without saying that she had *not* rung, she invited her in to make her welcome to 'Elma.

"Lor' bress de dear chile," she said, opening wide the door, and courtesying lower and lower until 'Elma thought she was going down upon her knees, "Lor', bress her, I never spected to see her look so cum to life agin. Welcome hum, Miss Almy; de house was like a glumy old prisin widout ye."

"Thank thee, Judy; I have been very happy ever since, but I am glad to be at home again, and still more glad that you are, all so pleased to see me;" and she reached out her hand to shake hands with the warm-hearted creature, who rubbed her own swarthy five fingers vigorously upon her white apron before taking it, as though there were any fear of

transferring its color to the one which she was about to clasp. After shaking it for an indefinite space of time, she made another courtesy, lower if possible than the first, and left the room without another word. After closing the door she courtesied again, with her face turned toward it, as though there was a satisfaction in doing homage to so much loveliness, even though it were unseen and at a distance. Then, applying the corner of her apron to either eye, she held up her rough black hand and said, in a voice that showed there were tears very near,—

"*She* don't care nuffin 'bout de color; she knows dey'll all be white alike in de kingdom cum. Lor' how Massa Wick look at her! jis' like he be jealous when she shake me by de han'. Better keep yer eyes to ye self; she aint gwine to scarafice herself on de likes ob *you* when dem are brack hosses am aroun'. Dis nigger can't tell de reason, no way, but she allus want to git out ob sight when Massa Wick any whar roun'. It seems like as if he eyes allus say, 'Git out, you nigga!' and dar aint no love lost atwixt us. He allus make me tink ob dat ole feller what steal de sheep's clovin! Look out, Miss Almy, dat he don't 'ceive de little lamb wid him sof coat. Massa Wick, Massa Wick, Judy hab got an eye on you; an if eber you *do* try it she'll——"

She ceased speaking, quite unable to tell what she would do in case of such an event, but the flourish she gave her huge black fist was more expressive of her determination than any words could possibly have been.

She entered the kitchen as she spoke the last words, and Joe, seeing the angry flourish of her hand, took the demonstration entirely to himself, and made a precipitate rush under the table, very much to Judy's amusement.

"Come out dar, you nigga; nobody aint a sayin' nuffin to you; I's talkin to massa Wick."

"I dulent see 'im no whar," stammered Joe, coming out upon his hands and knees, and looking, as he peered about in search of "Massa Wick," very much like a young monkey.

"I 'spec not, Joe; I's 'dressin' his speret."

"Whar is it?" questioned the child, looking timidly around the kitchen.

"Law sus, you can't neber see a speret, chile; dey goes here, an' dar, an' ebery whar, an' you can't neber tell whar dey be, nor whar dey baint."

"Mebbe it'll git under de bed and cotch me when it's all dark in de night," suggested Joe.

"Now you jis' shet up yer talkin';" ordered Judy, tired of his questioning. "Picaninnies like you can't 'spec to understand sperets."

Joe was quenched by this last remark. It was the usual way of silencing him when he became too inquisitive upon knotty subjects. He dared say nothing more, but he thought a great deal about it, and dreaded the time when he should be sent to bed and left alone in the dark.

'Lidie was asleep when 'Elma arrived, and when she woke she found her cousin leaning over her little bed, looking at her with eyes brimful of love and admiration. She looked at 'Elma very sleepily, for some minutes, without speaking or stirring.

"'Lidie does not know me," said 'Elma.

"Yeth I do too; ith Couthin 'Elma; only she had white cheekth and, thee's got red oneth."

"I brought those from the mountains, 'Lidie; aint they nicer than the white ones?"

"*I* loved her with the *white* oneth," replied the child, as though, in her estimation there was no advantage in the change.

"Well, I love 'Lidie all the same, red cheeks or white; so give me a kiss, and let's be friends the same as we used to be;" and raising the child in her arms, she kissed her again and again, and they were soon as familiar as before.

A week had passed since the return of the Everets to town: calls had been exchanged, and

Cousin Catharine was delighted to know that 'Elma had won a still warmer place in all their hearts during the closer intimacy of the summer.

School commenced at the beginning of the second week after their return, and 'Elma stood once more among her companions, in health and strength. It was a pleasant day, that first one at school; *very* pleasant to Maude and 'Elma.

There was only one sad, dissatisfied face in all the room—Fannie Bruce. The return to school and its restrictions were very distasteful to her. She had been enjoying such perfect liberty of late, she scarce knew how to submit to the somewhat stringent rules of Miss Willson's establishment. She seemed to have grown some years older during the brief vacation, and looked upon her previous companions as quite too young and inexperienced to sympathize with her tastes and feelings. She nodded condescendingly to 'Elma, as she passed her in the hall, and reserved all her warmer demonstrations for Maude and Minnie Marston.

There was no opportunity for conversation during school hours, but when the girls were left to themselves for the evening, Fannie related, with great relish, a number of her flirtations, and made the most of all the attention she had received.

When she was quite talked out, she threw herself upon the sofa, saying,—

"I am done for to-night. Maude, you and Minnie must give me an account of *your* summer's flirtations now; and 'Elma—I suppose, Maude, you have made a fashionable young lady of her by this time?"

"No, Fannie; I doubt if 'Elma will ever become a very fashionable young lady; indeed I do not think she has any ambition in that direction. As to *my* flirtations, you forget how quietly I have been spending the summer. I have had no opportunity to exercise my ability in that way, if I had the desire."

"Sly boots!" rejoined Fannie. "I had an account of Cousin Phil's visit to Westchester: he could no more resist the temptation to flirt, in a place like that, than he could exist without telling me all about it after it was done."

"Is Mr. Stetson a flirt?" asked Maude. "I never thought he was."

"Perhaps not," replied Fannie, with a gay, musical laugh. "You see, Phil does the thing artistically; one would never dream that it was not all in earnest. He has a line or two of poetry ready for every occasion. There is nothing so taking as an

apt quotation, and Phil always thinks of the right thing just at the right moment."

As Fannie uttered these words, there was pictured in Maude's memory, the little lake Glenida, lying fair and placid in the moonlight. Her recollections were so vivid that she could almost hear the rustle of the foliage as the summer wind sighed gently among the branches, and stirred the leaves to pleasant music; but above all there came back to her these words, and with them the voice and expression of one who had spoken them in the hush of the bland summer evening long ago:

"Spirit of love, spirit of bliss!

Thy holiest time is the moonlight hour,

And there never was moonlight so sweet as this!"

Were Fannie's words true? Time, the great truth-teller, will reveal all things.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ONE OF FANNIE'S FLIRTATIONS CONTINUED.

WE shall pass over the coming winter without stopping to relate particulars of the little circle of which we write. Things glided on in the usual quiet, monotonous way in Miss Willson's domicile, and the young ladies whose acquaintance we have made, are congratulating themselves that, for them, the toils and slavery of the school-room are well-nigh ended.

Harry Everet, too, was going through his last school-days, and he and Maude were anticipating what comparatively few persons enjoyed in those days,—a voyage to Europe. Mr. Everet had never travelled abroad, and it had been the delight of his later years, to talk with his children of the time when, school-days ended, they should journey together through the magnificent Old World. That time was fast approaching, and both Maude and Harry were striving for the highest degree of scholastic excellence.

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'Elma and Hope were progressing rapidly with their studies, and their home-circle was as happy as the association of refinement and intelligence ever make that hallowed spot.

Levi was still the kind, confidential, ready friend, upon all occasions.

Minnie Marston was as usual, living in the happiness of others, beloved by all, and so, contented and happy in her own quiet way.

Fannie Bruce was the only one who seemed to have any trouble, or cause for excitement. Her old friend, Fred Stanton, had found her out, and was paying most desperate homage to her charms. He had been met at her father's house by Philip Stetson, who very soon pronounced him no suitable companion for his cousin, and intimated that fact to Fannie herself, who thereupon, went off into a desperate fit of passion, and informed him most emphatically, that he was not her keeper, and intimated that Mr. Stanton, in *her* opinion, was far superior to those young gentlemen who set themselves up for saints.

Philip had taken some pains to inform himself with reference to Mr. Stanton's character and reputation, and had found him to be, as he had at first supposed, a most worthless young scapegrace;

whereupon, he went at once to Fannie's father, and made him acquainted with all he had learned.

Mr. and Mrs. Bruce canvassed the matter over between themselves, and it was decided that Fannie must be spoken to upon the subject, and advised to dismiss the young gentleman at once. Her father undertook to discharge this point of duty, and it required some courage, for Fannie made it a point never to be controlled outside of the school-room. Miss Willson was the only person who could command her obedience, and Fannie looked up to, and respected her more than she did her own mother, in whom she recognized only a tool for working out her own designs,—a creature full of pride and ambition, without any rule, or fixed principles of character to direct her aright when the paths of good and evil intersect each other so cunningly that even the wisest sometimes go astray.

What more pitiable sight is there in life than a young, impetuous, inexperienced girl, standing upon the brink of womanhood, just launching away from the happy hours of childhood into the great sea of active life, without a parent to whom she can turn in confidence and say, "*Mother, help me.*" If there be one *more* pitiable, it is the mother to whom such an appeal would come in vain.

Alas! how many fashionable young ladies of the

present day have just such fashionable mothers as Mrs. Bruce, who, like her, take more interest in the last new dress, or bonnet, than they do in the helping to form for their children a character and principles which shall be to them in after life more precious and useful than the most costly jewels, and in eternity a crown, the like of which no earthly workman, however cunning his hand, or precious his material, shall ever be able to fashion. A crown, not of the perishable treasures of earth, whose lustre time shall sully, but of the pure gems which God's own wisdom has pronounced precious, the brilliancy of which the rolling ages of eternity alone can perfect.

Mothers of America, let us not forget when we leave our nightly prayers upon the altar, that among our most earnest pleadings for those we love, be these: "O Father! make my life beautiful; teach me so to live, and love, and influence, that in my example, these whom Thou hast given me may see Thy glory shining through, and wish for no higher good than to be *like* Thee."

Methinks there could be no greater or higher glory, than to hear one's children saying, "Through my mother's example, virtue and all moral excellence have become beautiful to me;" and if it were sweet to hear this *now*, how much sweeter when we

meet up yonder, to witness the gathering together of His jewels!

The interview between Fannie and her father was anything but a pleasant one. She was violent in defence of her favorite, and her father, now fully alarmed, was more decided than one would have thought it possible for him to be when speaking to his daughter. She protested that the young man had no serious intentions in visiting her, and declared it was making her quite ridiculous to make such a fuss about it, and left the room in a high state of disgust, declaring that Philip was a meddling fellow, and she did not at all thank him for his interference in her matters. She considered herself quite capable of choosing her own friends, and one thing was quite certain—Philip would not be one of the chosen if he did not stop his goings on.

Thus ended the interview; and as Fannie was under the surveillance of Miss Willson during the week, no opportunity offered for her meeting Frederic Stanton, except the interval of her leaving school on Friday afternoon, and her return on Monday morning.

Once, indeed, Miss Willson discovered her exchanging signals with a young gentleman from her window, and without a word of remonstrance, she

was informed that, for the future, she could occupy an inner room, where there were no windows opening upon the street or garden.

She was not aware that Miss Willson had witnessed the manœuvring, but upon this order being issued, she understood it at once, and was at a loss to conjecture who could have given the information that it was evident the lynx-eyed lady possessed.

Thus the winter glided by, with its usual alternations of storm and sunshine—*literally and figuratively*.

CHAPTER XXV.

OLD FRIENDS IN NEW PLACES.

SPRING again. June and its blossoms have once more made the earth beautiful.

June roses have faded and fallen, and the harvest moon looks down upon a white-winged vessel, far out on the Atlantic, where are congregated a little party that we have often met before. A fair girl of eighteen is seated upon the deck, watching the sailors, as they ascend the tall masts, and move with cat-like agility among the rigging.

Beside her, as having a claim to the nearest position, is a youth, in the flush and flower of manhood.

An old gentleman is seated upon the other side, and the hand of the girl toys carelessly with the silvery curls that are scattered over his temples. His eye rests upon the two young people with satisfaction. We say emphatically "*his eye*," for there was no plurality, and the half of Milton's affliction had fallen upon him long ago.

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A little removed from these is a lady somewhat past the middle age, but with traces of great beauty still lingering, like a rosy cloud in the west, seen after the twilight shades have gathered gray and sullen in the eastern heavens.

Close by, and with his arm fondly encircling her, is a young man of earnest, thoughtful countenance. As the vessel rapidly pursues her way over the tranquil waters, leaving a long line of snowy foam stretching far away to the west, he looks,—not onward toward the far-off land to which they are journeying,—but back, back beyond the vessel's track of foam; back to the far-west, with an expression that said unmistakably, "Yonder in the sunset-land have I left my treasure, never so dear as since the ocean is stretching its dark waters between us."

The young girl turned, and seeing his absent look, arose, and approaching him, said, —

"Why, Harry, how sad you are looking. I am afraid mamma has had but a dull companion. Come, Philip, and help me to drive away this cloud that has gathered so darkly over him."

"Papa, if you will be seated here, we will take Harry for a promenade," and placing herself between the two young men, she took an arm of each, and they walked until the cloud had disappeared

from Harry's brow, though it was far from being all sunshine in his heart.

This little party of which we write, were to spend a year in travelling abroad, and upon their return, Philip and Maude would consecrate the vows already made; for in spite of all Fannie Bruce's cunningly devised insinuations, and attempts to rouse the green-eyed monster, their friendship had remained firm, had ripened into love, which had been mutually confessed; had received a parent's blessing, and was settling into that holy and beautiful state of beatitude of two hearts attuned to the same harmony, — than which earth has no greater happiness to be desired, and Heaven no sweeter foretaste of itself to give.

Harry, it will have been already seen, was more interested in 'Elma than Maude, or any other person than himself had as yet suspected; indeed we do not think he knew himself how indispensable she was to his happiness, until he had parted with her, and knew that it would be many months before he should grasp her hand again, or hear her soft voice murmuring the words that made time pass so pleasantly. The *words* he could not remember now; it was the *voice*, the winning, gentle way that came back to him, the expression of the dark, liquid eye, that always endorsed her words,

and made him feel that here at least was truth, pure and unadulterated. And least of all did 'Elma suspect that he entertained for her any sentiment beyond a pure, warm friendship. As the most valued friend of his sister, she knew that he esteemed and respected her. Once, when she had been saying to Maude, in Harry's presence, how happy she would be if she had a brother, Maude replied, "You *have* a brother, Daisy; all that is mine, I will share with you, even to the half of this good brother. Harry, shall it not be so?" but Harry turned away without replying, and 'Elma knew that he was not willing she should be his sister, but she never dreamed of that deeper love that would one day prompt him to think of her as his wife.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ROMANCE CALLS UP AN ECHO FROM REALITY.

WHILE the Everet party are pursuing their journey, we will return to the home circle where 'Elma and Hope are enjoying their vacation. They were very sad after parting with Maude and Harry, and felt for a time that the greatest charm of their every-day life was gone. The intimacy between the two families had increased and strengthened until they had become really necessary each to the comfort and happiness of the other; and while we have seen the travellers far away on the ocean, thinking kind and loving thoughts of those dear friends left behind, we might have seen, by the light of the same red harvest-moon, two young girls sitting alone in the cosey parlor at Cousin Catharine's, speaking and thinking of Maude and Harry, and comforting themselves with thoughts of the time when there would come long and frequent letters, telling of their journey, and all the wonders of the far-off land which they

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were neither of them likely ever to see. Their circle was very small, and the two who were gone were a sad, sad loss, robbing that little circle of its brightest links.

How natural it was, that they should have drawn so close to each other! they were lonesome, and the lonely heart longs for near association.

While they sat thus, Levi came in, and taking a seat near them began chatting pleasantly upon the topics of the day. Since they had parted with their friends, he had become more social, and every evening found him one of the home circle; sometimes reading aloud for them while they employed themselves with some light fancy work; at others chatting merrily with Hope, who generally challenged him in her frolicsome way to guess some knotty conundrum, or to help her out with some mathematical problem to which her patience, not her ability, was unequal. He talked sometimes with 'Elma, and, at such times, it seemed as though his voice had quite another tone to that in which he spoke to others. There was a mingling of tenderness and deference which was only heard when speaking to her. Cousin Catharine had noticed this, and often, when he knew it not, she saw his eyes fixed upon 'Elma with an expression which puzzled her clear-sighted penetration to interpret. Lately, since he

had become more domestic and familiar, she had noticed this more frequently, and often when turning the leaves of his book, apparently looking for some particular passage, or chapter, she saw that his hands moved mechanically, and that he looked, not at the book, but at 'Elma, with that peculiar expression of admiration, and its other strange mingling which she could in no wise understand. That he *admired* her was very evident; that he was kind and respectful to her, equally so.

Cousin Catharine had known Levi for a long time, and from his proper conduct, his kind and respectful demeanor, she had come to value him very highly, and felt toward him almost as she might have done to a younger brother; and so they lived in the daily interchange of friendly and familiar courtesies.

Judy and 'Lidie were the only ones who did not partake of the liking for Levi. In both these cases, the prejudice might have been imputed to ignorance. Reader, if thou hesitatest between two friends, which of the two to choose, place thou a little child between them, and, without either speaking, see thou to which the little one will turn; *him choose for thy friend*, knowing that the angels say, "This one is nearer to the pure in heart."

Minnie Marston was a frequent visitor, and helped

as best she could to fill in 'Elma's heart the void made by the absence of her nearer friend. She was never weary of talking of Maude and Harry, and lately she had spoken frequently of Cevillian Lee, who had now finished his college course and taken up his residence in the city of New York, for the purpose of pursuing the study of the law.

It was September,—one of those soft, balmy days, whose evenings are so tempting for a stroll,—when Cevillian Lee and Minnie Marston rang the bell and were shown into Cousin Catharine's parlor, where sat 'Elma, Hope, and Levi. After the usual greetings, they said to 'Elma that they had called to claim her company for a walk. The evening was too fine, Cevillian said, to remain indoors, and they wanted to enjoy an hour of the delicious air and moonlight. Levi was invited to accompany them, but declined; and walking to the furthest corner of the room he took a seat just where the shades fell heaviest, and without being seen himself he could discern every expression upon the faces of those who were seated in the moonlight. Cousin Catharine did not see him then, or she would have understood the expression that had often defied her reading before.

'Elma went out with her friends, and when she returned Levi had left the parlor and she saw him

no more that night. In the morning she had a headache and came late to breakfast, just as Levi was leaving the room. She apologized to her cousin for her tardiness, giving her reason for the delay. Levi heard this, and returning to the breakfast-room, he went to the mantel for something which was not there, then turning to 'Elma he asked if she were ill.

"Oh, no," she replied; "only a little headache; it will soon pass off." He hoped so, and with his usual "good-morning" he left the room.

The day proved stormy, consequently there was no going out. A walk was 'Elma's remedy for a headache, and usually acted like a charm; but to-day the storm was too severe. The evening was equally unpropitious. The wind seemed bent upon doing mischief; and after howling in area ways and narrow alleys, it would come out, as if impatient of the restraint in such cramped-up places, and giving vent to its wild fury, tear off around exposed corners, and sweeping through the murky streets it would flutter the rags of the beggar and the wrappings of the millionaire with equal respect; then away out to the vacant lots, where there were no brick walls to hurl itself against, it howled and roared in the unrestrained fury of its might, making the night terrible with its pitiless vagaries.

In strong contrast to the gloom and general discomfort without, shone the bright and cheery drawing-room, with its usual little circle surrounding the centre-table, each one employed in some way, but all silent except Levi. He read aloud from an old romance, in which the beautiful heroine was represented as being a portionless maiden, whose lover was on every hand beset by difficulties and discouragements because of his love for this poor but beautiful and amiable girl. Levi read on for a time, earnestly, but when he had finished the chapter he closed the book, and turning to Cousin Catharine he said, —

"I scarcely know what I should do were I placed in the situation of this imaginary hero; his interest demands that he should forget this Nellie; but love does not come and go at will. The old uncle is heartless and mercenary: were it *my* case I had rather have Nellie, poor as she is represented to be, than the other with her fifty thousand pounds. But it is not this alone, — all his prospects in life are cut off if he offend this old tiger of an uncle."

Hope laughed aloud:

"Why, Levi, it's only a story; thee looks as serious as though it was actual truth: such things never happen in real life!"

"Do they not? My little friend, there are every-

day experiences that far exceed this romance; only the heartaches, and the bitter, racking thoughts we bear about with us are untold and unwritten."

Turning again to Cousin Catharine, he said, —

"This is *one* subject upon which I think friends should not attempt to use too great influence. This mysterious sentiment, or passion, which we call affection, is a thing which should not be lightly interfered with. I believe it is heaven-sent, and if once blighted, the baser passions of the heart may gain ascendancy, and those who have meddled with this thing of God's own planting, will find, oftentimes, that weeds will spring up in place of the beautiful flowers which they have crushed. The soil becomes cold and sterile, and will yield henceforth '*nothing but leaves*.' "

He spoke very earnestly, and his voice was low and thrilling. Cousin Catharine replied briefly, —

"I think with thee, it is a holy thing, and should not be subject to the control of selfish or avaricious motives."

'Elma only looked at him and said nothing, but there crept into her heart an assurance that he had some personal experience upon the subject, and from that evening she felt for him a sympathy which prompted her to offer him many little kindnesses and attentions which she had never thought

of doing before. She looked up to Levi as being much older and wiser than herself, and received all the little attentions he offered her with that vague sort of satisfaction which we often feel without stopping to ask ourselves from whence it arises.

About the first of October, the usual routine of the quiet household was somewhat varied by the unexpected arrival of the head of the family. They had not anticipated seeing him until some two or three weeks later, but finding he could reach home a little earlier than the time named to his family as that of his return, he had not advised them, but determined to give them the pleasant surprise of appearing among them unexpected. His journey had been a prosperous one, and his return brought happiness to the little circle with which we have been so familiar during his absence. Judy was extravagant in her expressions of delight at his return, and more than once in the course of the day poor Joe was threatened, upon the slightest dereliction from what Judy thought the rules of "*propriety*," that if he did not "*walk chalk*," Massa would tend to his case.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DISCLOSURE.

AS the fall advanced 'Elma's health became delicate, and it was decided that she should not go to school, as her strength was insufficient for close application to study: so Hope took her daily walk alone, and 'Elma was no longer a pupil of Miss Willson's. Without Maude, and school, she often found the time tedious. Her life was very simple, and she had none of the excitements to which fashionable young ladies resort when the hours drag. Knowing this, Levi often asked her to go out for a walk in the evening, and upon one or two occasions had been met by his brother when walking with her. Ezra knew 'Elma from having seen her at Friend Ring's house, and had heard his brother speak of her frequently during her severe illness. In this way he had become somewhat acquainted with her history, and knew that she was an orphan, and without fortune. This last deficiency was sufficient in *his* estimation

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—to stamp her as an undesirable companion for his brother. In one way or another he had acquired wealth,—to him the sum total of all earthly good,—and he was anxious to see his brother, of whom he was really very fond, make what he called an “eligible match,” and secure wealth and a wife by the same ceremony. It will be remembered that we have spoken of Ezra Weeks in a previous chapter, and we need not repeat what we have already said of him. He exercised a powerful influence over his younger brother, and as all Levi's future prospects were associated with him, and for the enviable position he occupied he was entirely dependent upon him, to offend him, or act in opposition to his advice and expressed wishes, would be almost ruinous.

Thus the shortening days of the saddest season of the year rolled on, and the falling leaves rustled and fluttered as though they had a tale to tell of all the sad and sorrowful things which they should see ere the spring sun should bring forth the foliage of another year to clothe the branches from which they had fallen.

Cousin Catharine could but notice the increasing intimacy between Levi and 'Elma. She did not disapprove of it, therefore she said nothing to 'Elma upon the subject until well convinced that she

ought so to do. One evening when they had all been sitting together in the drawing-room, after Levi had bid them good-night, and Hope was in her own room giving a last look over to-morrow's lessons, she thought 'Elma lingered as though she had something upon her mind of which she wished to speak; or perhaps she expected *her* to speak: she evidently lingered for some purpose. The evening had been cold, and there was a fire upon the hearth; it had burned low, and the glowing coals were growing white as the two sat there waiting each for the other to speak. Oh! could they have seen then what each knew ere long, would they have gone to rest that night with such peaceful hearts, never suspecting that the result of that evening's conference would be fresh to-day in the hearts of some who remember 'Elma as she looked that night, even when the lapse of seventy years have driven things of minor importance from the memory that is fast losing its hold upon the things of time.

'Elma wished to speak, but her tongue seemed paralyzed and she could not utter a word. She rose, and standing behind her cousin's chair she put her arms around her neck and rested her head upon her shoulder. Cousin Catharine could feel her heart beat, and her breath come quick, as though

she was making a great effort to keep back her tears.

"Well, 'Elma," said her companion, "thee would speak to me of something that interests thee deeply: is it of Levi? I have seen and understood."

The tears, long suppressed, came now, and a faint "yes" showed that she was not mistaken.

"Why does thee feel so sad at speaking to me of this? Thee well knows how highly I value him, and any preference that he shows for thee could only give me pleasure. His tenderness to thee through all thy feeble health is sufficient to assure us of his great kindness of heart. Many young men would have taken a dislike to one who was so much complaining as thee has been, but this seems only to have increased his interest in thee. I do not wish to intrude upon thy confidence, but thee knows how interested I am for thee, and if there is anything that thee feels that thee ought to say to me, let no false feeling of delicacy keep thee silent. Levi would say nothing to thee, I am sure, that he would not be willing thee should tell to me; for he is an honorable man, and as such I can trust him."

"Yes: but I do not think he wishes me to tell thee yet; for a whole week I have kept it from thee—thou, who hast been so kind to me; to whom, until this, I have confided every thought."

Sinking upon her knees, she clasped her cousin's hands, and leaning her head upon them, murmured,—

"Dear Cousin Catharine, forgive me; it was wrong; but I knew thee had such confidence in him, and he said it would not be sinful to keep our love a secret for a little time. Oh, it was so sweet to be loved by such a manly heart as his: I who have been so lonely; who have never interested any one before, only through sympathy for my misfortunes,—to know that I occupy the first place in some one's heart; to feel that that heart is thinking of me day after day, and I shall never be lonely or uncared for again! It was so sweet to know all this, that I forgot my duty, and have lived only in that precious thought, that I was loved! forgive me, that in my happiness I forgot *thee*, than whom I can never have a truer or a kinder friend."

Cousin Catharine raised her from her attitude of penitence, and kissed away the tears that had so relieved her heart.

"Then Levi did not wish thee to tell me this."

"Oh, yes; I was to tell thee; he will tell thee himself, but not quite yet. He wishes that his brother should not know it for a little time; for some reason he says it would be better to keep it to ourselves until spring; and then—"

She hesitated, but her companion knew that she would have said, "then we shall be married."

Cousin Catharine knew that Ezra Weeks was a very peculiar man, and for this reason she excused Levi for asking 'Elma to keep their engagement secret; and she promised to say nothing about it until he himself should speak to her upon the subject. So implicit was her confidence in him that she felt satisfied he had some good and proper reason for making the request.

'Elma felt relieved that she had confided to her the important secret; but when she saw that she did not censure her for not doing so before, and did not accuse Levi of having done wrong in counselling her to silence, she felt a sort of proud confidence in him, and said in her own mind,—

"It was foolish in me to feel so unhappy about it; if it had been wrong he would not thus have advised me." She felt almost as though she had done him an injustice in thinking there was anything improper in her keeping the matter to herself.

Days and weeks glided on, and Levi's attentions to 'Elma were of such a marked and open nature, and his kindness and interest in all that concerned her so manifest, that it seemed he was quite willing the every one should know what were his sentiments and intentions towards her. Still he said nothing

upon the subject to Cousin Catharine, although she often spoke in a way to let him know she was not unobservant of all that was passing between them. To 'Elma she often spoke upon the subject, and at such times she always replied, —

“It is because of his brother he wishes it to be so. Very soon, he says, he will tell thee why he has done this, and until then we must believe, as he says he is sure we will do afterward, that it has been for the best. He has never asked me, and I have never told him that I had named it to thee.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

NEWS FROM OVER THE SEA.

RALL had given place to winter, and its snows were covering the russet murmurers that make melancholy and prophetic music at the grave of summer, when there came from across the waters a package of letters for 'Elma, — letters from the friends she had so missed, and longed to see. One from Maude, another from Harry, and a third one! ah, this is from Philip. It was kind of him to remember her in all his happiness, and her eyes are almost blinded with tears as she breaks, one after another, the three seals, just to look upon the familiar names before waiting to read either letter through. Maude's is the one of greatest interest, and claims the first reading.

They were written the day after the party landed, consequently contained but little incident beyond an account of their voyage, which had been a very calm and pleasant one, though in these days of

rapid progress it would be considered very tedious. They had been weeks at sea, and both Mrs. Everet and Maude had been very ill for the first few days, but after they had become accustomed to the ship this passed away, and they had enjoyed the voyage exceedingly.

"By the way," Maude wrote, "do you remember, Daisy, my telling you the account Fannie Bruce gave me of her flirtations at Rockaway? Well, among her victims was a Mr. Lenox, of whom she delighted to boast as one of whose admiration and preference the ladies were particularly ambitious; but, as *she* said, their aspirations were all in vain; he never yielded his homage to any one until *she* came; and she represented that he had been made supremely miserable by her preference for that flipperty-gibbert friend of hers, Fred Stanton. Imagine my surprise on the day we sailed, as I was leaning over the side of the vessel (feeling quite home-sick and not a little sea-sick), at being introduced by Philip to his friend Mr. James Lenox. I knew from Fannie's description it was the same. Philip made his acquaintance at Rockaway, he is one of his most valued friends. We were very intimate during the voyage, and, *with one exception*, he interests me more than any gen-

tleman I have ever met, I cannot imagine him being seriously interested in Fannie, though Philip tells me she put on the amible and unsophisticated to great effect, and Mr. Lenox was really her ardent admirer; but she tired of his noble, manly character, and when Mr. Stanton appeared upon the *tapis* the temptation was too great; she threw off the flimsy disguise and appeared in her real character, whereupon Mr. Lenox was disenchanted at once, and yielded up the prize without a struggle. He is, I should think, past thirty; tall and elegant in person, dignified and intelligent, with such kind and earnest eyes that one feels at once that they can trust him like a brother. Oh, poor mistaken Fannie! to have thrown away such love as I am sure he is capable of giving, for the selfish, worthless adventurer who is enslaving all your heart.

"Philip tells me his friend has had bitter heart trials, having been engaged in his youth to a young lady worthy of all his love, who died the day before they were to have been married. I should have said, had I met him without knowing anything of his history, that he had had some such experience; for though he is always cheerful, there is a sadness in his very smile that makes one feel like treating him very kindly, as we do those whose hearts we

know have been darkened by some great sorrow; a spontaneous going forth of sympathy, we know not why.

"I wish that you could know him, Daisy: I am sure you would agree with me in admiring and respecting him; but it is not likely you will ever meet: he tells me it is quite possible he may never return to America. He has been in Europe before, and since the death of his parents—some two years since—he has determined to spend the balance of his days abroad. We shall travel together, and this will add greatly to the pleasure of our party, for he is familiar with the principal places of interest which we desire to visit. Philip is always urging me to be attentive and kind to him, so you see he is not a bit jealous. My noble, generous-minded Philip! there is no place in thy manly heart for such inferior sentiments. Oh, Daisy, every day assures me that I have not as yet learned to appreciate him as he deserves; and my only sorrow is that I am not more worthy of all the kindness and affection he lavishes upon me. My parents think that next to Harry he is the excellent of the earth, and Harry is quite satisfied with his brother-elect. What says my sister Daisy?

"How often I have thought of our conversation on the day that Philip arrived at Lake Mahopac;

when you had discovered our secret, and gave me your congratulations in the spray of snowy orange blossoms which you placed upon my bosom. 'Twas then, Daisy, you told me of your longing for love, absolute and supreme, and blushed when you had done so, as though you had indulged some unwomanly weakness. Oh, Daisy, it is something to be desired; not as the light and frivolous talk of it, a thing of to-day to be forgotten to-morrow, but *true, heaven-sent love*; and when it shall have dawned upon *thy* heart, then, and not till then, canst thou know how thoroughly happy is thy sister Maude.

"Philip and Harry are both writing, so I need say nothing for them. My father and mother—*our* father and mother—send much love and many kind wishes to you, and kindest remembrance to Mrs. Ring and little Hope. And now, Daisy, I must write that little word which you speak so prettily—*farewell*. Accept now and forever the sincere love of

"SISTER MAUDE."

When 'Elma had finished reading this letter she dropped it upon her lap, and covering her face with her hands she had, what young ladies call "a real good cry;" some of its words seemed

to have burned into her very brain, and were repeated over and over as she sat thus weeping.

"When it shall have dawned upon *thy* heart then and not *till* then canst thou know how thoroughly happy is thy sister Maude." Oh, if Maude were only here, that she might throw herself upon her bosom and tell her that the heavenly influence *had* dawned upon her heart; that she had realized more than she had ever hoped or dreamed of the blessedness of being loved; that the magnetic intercommunion, of which Maude had told her that day when she leaned upon her shoulder and sighed that she was all alone, had culminated; "*time and circumstance*" had brought them together; they were resting "*in confidence*," and *one*, at least, was "*satisfied*."

She opened Harry's letter next. He said Maude would have told all that was worth telling, and he would not tire her with repetitions; he only wrote to tell her he wished himself at home again. He had not become interested in new things yet, and if he were asked to-night what he most desired, he would answer, "To see my little, black-eyed friend, 'Elma!'"

He never called her sister, but concluded by subscribing himself her "loving friend through time."

Philip's came last: a few lines of kind, brotherly import, and an assurance that were it possible for him to be made jealous, that fact would have already transpired, for Maude never passed an hour without in some way referring to her, and he thought her presence was the only thing required to complete the happiness of their little party. He told her that Harry wished for her twenty times a day, saying Maude and he had no eyes or ears for anything but themselves, and if 'Elma were there he would give them leave to be as selfish as they pleased.

"Dear Harry," she murmured, audibly, "I remember well thy kindness when my heart was bruised and bleeding, and how thou didst win the first smile from its sad depths by thy drollery: though thou wouldst never call me sister when Maude desired it, thou art the kindest and most considerate of friends!"


She rose, and placing the letters in her desk, she smoothed her hair and went down to meet the family at tea. She had sat a long time, and it was quite dark when she finished reading and thinking. The tears she had shed had left their traces; she was very pale, and her eyes were red and heavy. Levi noticed it immediately, and asked with much interest if she had a headache.

"No," she replied; "I have just received letters from Maude and Harry. I do not know why I should have been so foolish as to cry over them, but they are so kind, and bring back so vividly the many happy seasons we have spent together, that the tears *would* come, and I could not restrain them."

The explanation satisfied him, and he said no more; but during the meal Cousin Catharine recognized the peculiar expression of which we have so often spoken, without being able to explain what it was. Perhaps, had she seen it upon the face of another, she could have given it a name: of this one thing we are sure, in after years when she remembered Levi it was always with this expression that his image came before her, and *then* she had no difficulty in giving it a name.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WHICH WILL BE MORE FULLY UNDERSTOOD HEREAFTER.

N Saturday morning, December 21, 1799, the snow was falling in New York City just as it has continued to fall in December days for the sixty-nine years that have intervened between that time and the date of our history. The air was heavy and dark with the feathery flakes that all day long kept heaping themselves up in street and alley, and no one stirred abroad, who could possibly avail themselves of shelter of any kind.

'Elma thought this would be just the day for writing letters, so she set herself about answering the three she had lately received. Hope congratulated herself that it was Saturday and there was consequently no school; and Cousin Catharine busied herself in the usual routine of household duties. 'Elma was mistaken in thinking it a good day for writing, for after getting the necessary materials together, she found she was in no such mood; and

after having written one page of her letter to Maude, she concluded to abandon it, and finish when she felt more in the spirit. She felt nervous, and ill at ease to-day, and wished the weather were more propitious, that she might go out and steady her nerves by a little exercise in the open air. She placed the letter she had commenced in her desk, and taking a sheet of paper and the pencil, she wrote carelessly a few lines which at the time seemed of but little import. We will not read them now; we shall do so hereafter, when they are more in place, and their meaning will be better understood. She did not fully comprehend them herself at that time; they were among the things that had to do with the future; vague and undefined until the developments of time shall interpret them and give to us their hidden meaning. While she was writing, Cousin Catharine came into her room and took a seat near the window; looking out, she made some remarks upon the violence of the storm, to which Elma replied; and shoving the paper with which she had been busy into the drawer of the little table upon which she had been writing, she rose and went to the window to look out. As she stood where the light fell full upon her face, her cousin thought she looked ill and

troubled; and going to her she took her hand, and said affectionately,—

“Elma, thee is not well: something troubles thee; cannot thee trust me with it? Thee knows how interested I am for thee,—for ye both. Levi I love and can trust like a brother; is it because of your engagement standing as it does that thee seems so depressed and anxious?”

“No, no,” she replied, “it is not that. Is he not good, and noble, and honorable? and cannot we trust him for a few days? He says it will be only a few days more, and he will explain it all to thee. He is so kind, and generous, and considerate of me that I feel almost guilty that I should have had an anxious thought upon the subject. Indeed, dear cousin, I never dreamed of being so happy as I am in the love of such a noble heart; he would not counsel me to wrong; and whatever this matter is between him and his brother, I am convinced it will all be explained in good time. I feel nervous to-day, I cannot tell why. I think a little exercise in the open air would do me good. Thee knows I am not a house plant: I need every day, out-door sun and air to keep me in health and spirits, and as soon as the storm is over I shall apply the remedy.”

Thus assured, her cousin left her, fully satisfied that there was nothing radically wrong. Hope

came in and kept her company until evening, and with her merry chat the time passed pleasantly, and the cloud that had been resting upon 'Elma was in part dispelled.

Let us look in upon Levi for a few moments. He has kept indoors all day. As we see him he is standing in a workshop where are a number of men busily employed. There is one whose bench, or work-table, stands apart from the rest, and he looks a man in every way superior to his companions. His hair is streaked with silver, and he has a shrewd, intelligent look that makes one feel at once that he is master of the business he has undertaken. Levi has been talking familiarly with this man for some time, and the conversation is evidently not with reference to the work he is doing. They have been speaking low, as though it were desirable that the others should not hear; at length, speaking louder, Levi said, —

"Willets, you are a shrewd fellow: I want to ask your opinion upon an important subject. What would you do in a case like this. Suppose you had formed an attachment for a young lady—you must suppose yourself a young man for the time being—suppose you had formed an attachment for a young lady, one in every respect worthy of you, and insur-

mountable obstacles were in the way, impossible to be removed?"

The man dropped the tool with which he was working, and looking at Levi curiously for a moment, with one eye closed, replied, —

"Give her up and seek another."

Levi shook his head, slowly, as though the answer did not satisfy him, and said, —

"No: I *could* not and *would* not do that; I would sooner put her out of the way than see another enjoy her."

Willets took up the tool again and went on with his work, and Levi, drawing more closely to him, continued the conversation in a low and earnest tone. Several times the man ceased his work, and without raising his eyes, listened, as though the only important thing was to hear. At length, when the shop was growing quite dark, he unrolled his sleeves, and putting his tools together in their box he turned to Levi and said, —

"*I understand; depend upon me.*"

It was enough: without another word Levi left the place, and as he stepped into the street, the storm ceased, and the moon came out from among the clouds that were rapidly being dispersed by a sharp December wind. He walked briskly home, *straight home*; never turning to the right or left. He

hummed the air of a familiar song as he crossed the street, and when he entered the drawing-room, 'Elma thought she had never seen him look so handsome, or so happy. His countenance was glowing with health, the wind had brought a bright color to his cheek, and his eyes sparkled as he took 'Elma's hand and asked her if she was feeling more cheerful than on the previous evening. She answered in the affirmative, and he took a seat near her and spoke to Cousin Catharine of the storm and some occurrences of the day, from which he fell into conversation with the master of the house, and the evening passed in relating and listening to the incidents of interest which had transpired during Friend Ring's journey and absence from home. Levi spoke but little, but his eyes rested upon 'Elma with such unmistakable expressions of love, that she sat drinking in the quiet happiness for which her heart had so yearned and thirsted before this new phase of life had dawned upon her. Cousin Catharine saw it all, and inwardly thanked God that her adopted child had won to herself the affection of so sterling and kind a heart. As the silvery bell of the mantel clock chimed ten, the two older members of the party left the room. Hope soon followed, and Levi and 'Elma were left tête-à-tête.

We do not propose to give our readers an account of what their conversation was, for the simple reason that we do not know. We must leave them to judge from the remaining pages of this book what it was likely to have been. It was known only to those two; but the recording angel who rested upon his snowy wings to listen will not let it be lost, and we may learn it one day, when we stand before the great white throne, face to face with those, a part of whose history we are striving faithfully to give.

CHAPTER XXX.

'ELMA FORGETS THE WARNING OF HER CHILDHOOD, AND
GOES SLEIGH-RIDING ON FIRST-DAY EVENING.

SUNDAY morning dawned bright and beautiful. Church bells chimed, and worshippers gathered to bless God and thank him for all his goodness. Cousin Catharine did not go to meeting that morning, nor 'Elma. Only Friend Ring and Hope represented the family in the quiet little sanctuary where they worshipped. Levi went out between ten and eleven, saying to 'Elma as he left her that he was going to call upon his brother. In half an hour afterward she was surprised to see him walk into the drawing-room where she was sitting. He explained his hasty return, saying he had slipped and fallen on the sidewalk, and so sprained and bruised his ankle that it was very painful, and he had thought best to return without delay and apply some remedies. 'Elma informed her cousin of these facts, and she sent him a bottle of liniment, which he took, and went to his own room. 'Elma remained in the drawing-room read-

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ing until Hope came in; then, laying aside her book, they chatted until dinner-time. When Levi joined them at dinner, Cousin Catharine inquired after the bruised ankle. He replied that the liniment had been of great service, and thanked her for her kindness in sending it. He never failed to acknowledge the slightest kindness that was offered him, and let no opportunity pass unimproved when he could be of service to another. 'Elma remarked that her appetite was much improved since yesterday, whereupon Levi suggested that she ought not to let this beautiful day pass without going out; and Cousin Catharine thought, as she saw the look he gave 'Elma when he made this remark, that he had some particular meaning in it. When they had dined Levi went at once to his own room, only stopping a moment in the hall to make some remark to 'Elma. Friend Ring went out for a walk, and Hope ran in to see a schoolmate who lived close by. The families were very intimate and attended the same meeting. Henry Clement was one of those genial, large-hearted men to whom the name of "friend" applied in its true Christian sense, and was among the most valued acquaintance of Friend Ring and Cousin Catharine. This good lady was in her own room reading the blessed book whose teachings she endorsed, when 'Elma rapped

at her door and asked permission to come in and sit with her. She was always welcome, and her presence was no interruption, so her cousin went on with her reading. Occasionally she cast a glance at her visitor, whose mind she saw was not engaged with the book she held in her hand. Presently—thinking 'Elma had come to speak to her upon some subject of interest—she laid down her book and sat gently rocking back and forth, thinking she would speak when she saw her disengaged. She was not mistaken, for in the course of a few moments 'Elma put down the book she had seemed to be reading, and said,—

"I am sorry I was disappointed in getting my walking boots yesterday; I suppose the storm prevented their being sent home."

Her companion replied,—

"Why, thee must not think of going out to-day; the walking is too bad."

"Yes, it is bad," she replied, "but we shall not go until eight o'clock, and then it will be frozen."

"Thee says *we*: with whom is thee going?"

"With Levi," she answered.

"Are you going to see Marion?" her cousin asked, meaning Ezra Weeks' little daughter, of whom Levi was very fond, and of whom he often talked.

"No;" and with a flush rising to her cheek, she said, "I sometimes think his brother has a jealousy of me, and I do not wish to go there yet, though Levi has often invited me. Thee will not say that I must not go out this evening, Cousin Catharine? Levi seems particularly to desire it. We will stay but a short time, and I will be very careful about taking cold."

Her cousin, seeing her mind more than usually set upon it, raised no further objection, and only replied,—

"He is so careful of thy comfort, I think I can trust thee for a little time."

While they were speaking, Levi passed the door, went down stairs, and out into the street.

"He has gone to his brother's, and will not return until after tea," 'Elma replied to the look of inquiry her companion cast upon her.

Half an hour after this, Joe popped his woolly head in at the drawing-room door, to say that mammy said tea was ready. Hope had not yet returned, so the master and mistress of the house, and 'Elma, constituted the company around the tea-table.

At seven o'clock, when they were again in the drawing-room, Cousin Catharine, who was thinking of 'Elma's comfort, proposed that she should borrow a muff from a friend who lived next door. It

was very cold, and they neither of them owned one. This 'Elma thought quite unnecessary, as she should be out so short a time; but fearing her cousin would raise some objection to her going, she consented, and the muff was brought for her use. At a quarter before eight Levi came in, and taking a seat in the drawing-room commenced conversation with Friend Ring. Almost immediately 'Elma left the room; her cousin saw Levi's eyes upon her, and she thought he had motioned her to go. She took a lamp from the table and followed her immediately. 'Elma had thrown on her shawl, and was tying her bonnet when her cousin entered the room.

"Well, 'Elma," she said, "thee is ready for a march, I see."

"Yes," she replied, "pretty nearly."

In her haste she had pinned her shawl crooked. Cousin Catharine unpinned and straightened it; and taking up the lamp she noticed that she looked paler than usual, and fancied—perhaps it was only fancy—that she trembled, and seemed excited. She said nothing, thinking perhaps the air would do her good; and the two went out into the hall and down the stairs together. 'Elma walked slowly, drawing on her gloves as she went down. Cousin Catharine looked back at her, half-way down the stairs as she opened the drawing-room door and

went in. The moment she entered Levi rose and left the room, closing the door behind him. Voices were heard in the hall speaking softly. Cousin Catharine put her hand upon the latch intending to go out; *but she did not turn it.* Alas, why did she not? Why does fate lead us blind agents all through life, causing us to enter where she will; preventing where we most desire to go? She hesitated, with her hand upon the door, and while she did so two persons were distinctly heard to walk hurriedly to the street door and go out. Instantly she followed, and opened the door through which they had passed, expecting to see 'Elma and Levi upon the steps; but they were not there. There was a church close by, and many persons were on their way thither; she strained her eyes in vain; they were lost amid the crowd, and she could not distinguish them from others. She closed the door and ran up to 'Elma's room; why she did so she could not tell, nor can we; we only know her feelings were agitated beyond what she could then account for. When she returned to the room where her husband was sitting, she was ready to speak and tell him what 'Elma had told her with reference to her engagement with Levi, but again she hesitated, assuring herself she had no reason to feel thus alarmed.

Her husband saw she was anxious, and said to her, —

"I am surprised that thee should allow 'Elma to go out on such a night as this. She will be ill again, if she is not very prudent."

"She has gone with Levi," she replied, "and he is more careful of her than I am."

She then proceeded to tell him of the engagement, and all that 'Elma had told her; at which he was not surprised, as Levi's attentions to her were so marked that he had already anticipated this result. He saw no impropriety in it being kept private for a time, and, thus assured, Cousin Catharine felt relieved, and took up a book, in the interest of which she soon forgot her late anxiety. She was absorbed in the subject, and read for a long while without thinking how time was passing, and when she looked up the clock was pointing to half-past nine. She thought of 'Elma. She had been out an hour and a-half, and she was to be gone only a very short time. She put aside her book and stirred the fire, and set the chairs in their proper places, and did many other things such as we all do when we are waiting, and wish to make away with time as rapidly as possible.

It was just ten when Levi came in. He entered the room where she was sitting, and closed the door

behind him. She cast her eyes upon him: his countenance was pale as marble, and he seemed much agitated, for which she strove in her own mind to account. He had always seemed a person of such nice and tender feelings, and had made such high professions of friendship for her, that she thought he felt a little guilty at the liberty he had taken in becoming engaged to 'Elma without speaking to her upon the subject, knowing she was her protectress, and nearest relative. He took a seat, and leaning his head upon his hands in a very thoughtful manner, raised his eyes to hers and asked, —

"Has Hope got home?"

She answered, "Yes."

"Has 'Elma retired?"

"No, she has gone out; at least I saw her ready to go, and I have good reason to think she went."

He remarked, —

"I am surprised that she should be out so late at night, and *alone*."

Cousin Catharine did not understand why he should say this, and answered briefly, —

"I have no reason to think she went alone; thee knows very well she is never allowed to go out alone in the evening."

To this he made no reply, but sat looking into

the fire, earnest and thoughtful. Friend Ring had been so engaged with his book that he had not noticed the conversation which had been carried on before him. Cousin Catharine expected every moment to see 'Elma come in. She thought she had called to return the borrowed muff. After waiting for a quarter of an hour, her anxiety increased, and she determined to ask Levi for her — where she was. Just as she had made up her mind to do so, her husband laid down his book and left the room. Instantly the other arose and went out, and up to his own chamber. The thought at once occurred to her that he was afraid she would ask him for 'Elma. Thus left alone, she determined to sit up and wait for her. She turned the lamp low, and taking a seat near the fire listened and waited until twelve o'clock. But no 'Elma came to reward by her sweet, loving voice, the patient watcher who was every moment becoming more and more anxious. She took the lamp and searched the house in every part, thinking perhaps she had come in when he did, and had gone immediately up-stairs, and that he had been joking when he asked for her. No success attended her search. Hope occupied their bed alone. She went to her own room and made known her troubled feelings to her husband, repeating what she had before told him, that 'Elma had gone out

with Levi, that he had asked for her when he came in, and that she could in no wise account for her absence. He suggested that she might be stopping all night at the house of their friend, Henry Clement; but this was by no means satisfactory. She never absented herself from home for an hour without telling where she was going, and naming the probable time of her return.

The night passed away slowly enough. Cousin Catharine counted the weary hours until the clock struck five; then, worn out and exhausted with watching and anxiety, she fell into a profound slumber, and did not wake until Judy came up to say that it was seven o'clock, and Friend Ring and "Massa Wick" were waiting for breakfast. She rose immediately, and making a hasty toilet, ran down and took her seat at the tray. The meal was a sad one; no one felt like talking, and 'Elma's name was not mentioned. Levi ate but little, and left hurriedly while the others were still sitting at the table. While Cousin Catharine was speaking to her husband to the effect that they must send at once to the house of Henry Clement to make inquiry for 'Elma, they heard some one come in at the street door and trip lightly up stairs. Never doubting that it was she of whom they spake,

Friend Ring went out, quite satisfied that he left everything quite right at home, and Cousin Catharine rose to go to 'Elma's room, expecting to find her there. As she opened the room door, Levi met her and asked,—

"Has 'Elma got home?"

She answered, "I have not seen her," feeling dissatisfied that he should ask for her when she fully believed he knew where she was.

"I am surprised that she is not here. Where could she have stayed?"

She answered a little sharply, "'Elma is upstairs; I just heard her go up."

He replied, "It was me you heard."

"Then thee stepped more lightly than ever before; I am sure it was her step."

He immediately ran up-stairs, and almost instantly returned saying,—

"*She is not there!*"

Cousin Catharine was not satisfied, and went up herself to be quite certain. When she returned Levi was standing at the street door; he looked at her, and without saying a word went out. In a very few moments he returned, asking as before,—

"Has 'Elma come home?"

Upon receiving a negative reply, he said,—

"I am surprised at her going out so late at night, and *alone!*"

To which Cousin Catharine replied,—

"Indeed, Levi, to tell thee the truth, I believe she went out with *thee!* She told me she was to, and I believe she did."

He answered,—

"If she had *gone* with me, she would have *come* with me. I never saw her after she left the room."

Saying this, he turned and left the house.

The friend of whom the muff was borrowed came in at this moment to get it; she was going out early and required it. It was now about eight o'clock. Cousin Catharine requested her to wait for a few moments until she could send to Henry Clement's, where she hoped 'Elma had stayed all night. Judy was sent upon this errand, and in the course of fifteen minutes returned all out of breath, to say that,—

"Miss Almy had neber been dar at all, and dey don't know nuffin' 'bout her."

Upon hearing this they were greatly shocked, as they knew she had no other acquaintance with whom she was sufficiently intimate to stop all night. At this moment Hope came in ready for school. When her sister told her of her dis-

tressed feelings, and declared that all could not be right, Hope begged her not to be agitated, and laying down her books declared that she would soon know where 'Elma was. She intended to go at once to Levi. But as she turned to leave the room, he came in again and passed the door which she had left open. She stepped out into the hall, and fixing her searching black eyes upon him she demanded,—

"Levi, where is 'Elma?"

He answered, "I do not know."

"She told my sister she was going with thee; and I am sure she did," said Hope.

He answered as before,—

"If she had *gone* with me, she would have *come* with me. I never saw her after she left the room!"

He walked toward the door while saying this, opened it, and without another word passed out into the street.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHICH THROWS LIGHT UPON THE SUBJECT.

HOPE was very angry when she repeated what Levi had said to her, and upon learning the particulars her alarm was if anything greater than her sister's. She ran up to the room which she and 'Elma had occupied, looking curiously about, and into the closets, as though she expected to find there some clue to the mystery that so perplexed them. Then she opened the bureau drawers that 'Elma occupied. They were undisturbed; nothing was missing; and they were in their usual neat order. Her writing-desk sat upon the table, with the key in the lock. Hope opened it. There were two letters tied with a white ribbon, each bearing a large black seal; some notes which she had received from school-friends, and the three letters bearing a foreign postmark: these were all. Hope closed the lid and was about to leave the room, when she noticed the drawer of the

small table which they used for writing was partly open. She drew it out, there was nothing in it but a sheet of paper and 'Elma's pencil lying upon it. It was the paper and pencil she was using on Saturday, when Cousin Catherine had come in to sit with her, and she had spoken — they both had spoken — kind and trusting words of Levi.

Hope took up the paper, believing it to be a blank sheet; but she was mistaken, for upon turning it over, she discovered that two pages were filled with 'Elma's writing. She read the first few lines with eager eyes; then ran hastily to her sister with it, convinced that here they should learn something upon their present subject of interest. Cousin Catharine took the paper from her, and read it aloud. They were disconnected sentences, evidently not intended for any eye but her own. We will listen, in imagination, while Cousin Catharine reads:

"I cannot write to Maude to-day; I am too nervous. Would that she were here, that I might speak to her, and hear her dear voice; it would comfort me as it has often done before this great change came.

"I am happy, and yet I tremble, and feel anxious and excited.

"Levi — Levi — Levi. I love to think of him, and when he is not here that I may speak to him, I love to write his name; it is such an honest-looking name; as honest as his face.

"He would not ask me to do what was wrong; he knows the world better than I do; and he says I shall laugh some day when he tells me what a timid little thing I used to be.

"Dear Cousin Catharine! How happy I shall be when it is over, and he has told thee all. I feel almost guilty when I look at thee, and know that there is that within my heart of which I must not speak to thee. Soon, very soon — to-morrow night, as soon as we return — he will tell thee why we have done this, and we will ask thy forgiveness for this brief deception, and he will give thee the lines that will assure thee I am his wife. Thy friend — thy favorite — Levi, — he whom thou thyself hast told me thou could'st trust as a brother, tells me it will not be wrong, and I must believe him. At eight o'clock we are to go to the minister's house; at nine we shall be at home, and then thee will know all. Oh, how happy I shall be then!

"His brother desires him to marry an heiress, and will be offended when he knows he has taken a portionless orphan girl for his wife. Why should his covetousness interfere with our love? Levi says

I need not care for this, and I do not. He is all the world to *me*, and it would seem as though the sun had been quenched if anything should interfere to separate us.

"Dear father! Art thou looking down upon me now? and mother,—dear, gentle, loving mother! Is it true that the spirits of departed friends are around us; and know what is passing in heart and brain? I hope so, for I would have ye know of what I am thinking to-day. Methinks it would make ye happier—even in heaven—to know that your orphan child had found a kind, noble, manly heart to sustain and comfort her when the trials of life oppress and dishearten.

"Am I doing wrong in taking this step? No. I must not think so. I was always nervous and excitable; it will soon pass away.

"I will finish writing to Maude on Monday. Then I can tell her that I am married. Oh, how surprised she will be. And Harry and Philip! I must leave Maude to tell *them*; I could not do it. I feel as though I were dreaming, and it is so hard to know that I must not speak of what I am constantly thinking. I felt last night when Hope lay sleeping by my side as though I must waken her, and tell her all about it; and when the moon lighted up our room, and I saw her face resting so

peacefully upon the white pillow, I thought, *to-morrow night* I shall have no secrets, and the moonlight will look far more pleasant when I have nothing to conceal. I felt as though it were the eye of God, and my heart were naked and open before it.

"I wonder if ———"

The sentence was left unfinished, interrupted, no doubt, by her cousin entering the room. We cannot describe their consternation when they had read these lines, which so fully disclosed the plans and intentions with which the two had gone out on the previous evening. They determined to send for Levi at once, and were just about doing so when he came in, and, entering the room where they were, put his hat down upon the table. When he discovered their great agitation, he turned and took it up again, intending to go out; but just then Cousin Catharine stepped between him and the door, locked it, and took out the key, saying as she did so,—

"Levi, this matter has become too serious for us to keep quiet any longer. *Thee must now account for 'Elma*. She told me she was going out with thee, and I am sure she did;" and holding up the paper, with the contents of which we are already acquainted, she added, "I hold here a declaration

written by her own hand that you went out last night for the express purpose of being married. Of this engagement I was already aware; from her own lips I learned it."

He was struck with trembling and pallor, and clasping his hands he said, "She told you this? then I am ruined—*ruined*, undone forever, unless she appears to clear me."

He endeavored to put aside his unceasing attentions to her as meaning nothing beyond ordinary friendship. For two hours they talked anxiously and earnestly, Cousin Catharine and Hope weeping bitterly, and imploring him to tell them where 'Elma might be found; but he persistently denied having any knowledge of her whereabouts, repeatedly declaring that he had not seen her since she left the room last evening.

At the expiration of two hours the door was opened and he was set at liberty, though they had scarcely their senses left after his repeated denial of her. He went immediately to his brother and informed him of what had taken place, and denied there being any foundation for their having accused him as they had done; whereupon Ezra Weeks made his way at once to the house of Friend Ring, to learn if possible something definite upon the subject.

Cousin Catharine and Hope repeated to him all the particulars of Levi and 'Elma's acquaintance, telling him the reason Levi had given for wishing to keep their engagement secret for a time, and showing him the paper that had been found in 'Elma's room. He read it, and handing it again to Hope who had given it to him, remarked, with a smile of perfect composure,—

"Levi must be a wonderfully fascinating fellow!" He then asked, "Is there no way in which my brother can be cleared from the suspicions that you entertain, and the charge you bring against him?"

Cousin Catharine answered, "No! Were it possible to believe him innocent I could do it for him as soon as my own brother; but this is not possible; what we have seen, and heard, and experienced, we must believe."

The two brothers stood side by side, face to face with the accusers. The elder one stood erect, cold, proud, and defiant; the other, with his head bowed, pale and trembling; and there, upon the face that 'Elma had called "*so honest*," was the uninterpreted expression, a mystery soon to be revealed. The two left the house together, and with the elder no word was ever again exchanged by Cousin Catharine or any of her family.

Friend Ring came in at four o'clock, and being told of 'Elma's non-appearance, and what had transpired during the day, he gave immediate information to the public authorities of all the particulars, and was advised, should Levi return, to let him remain in the family, as by this means something might transpire to throw light upon the subject. He did return, and no further accusation was brought against him for the time being.

The affair soon became known throughout the city, and search was made in many quarters. Docks were examined, and rivers dragged to no purpose. Every day Levi became more and more anxious that 'Elma should be given up as lost past all possible recovery, though he himself continued anxious and thoughtful, taking little or no food; and at night his step might be heard hour after hour, pacing to and fro like a troubled spirit for which there was no rest.

On the third morning of 'Elma's absence, seeing Cousin Catharine in great distress of mind, he approached her, and taking her hand said,—

"Mrs. Ring, I implore you not to mourn so deeply; your mourning will never bring her back."

Fixing her tearful eyes upon him she said, "Levi,

why does thee say so? What reason has thee to think she will never return?"

His face was harsh and cruel then; the peculiar expression had taken entire possession of it; and he answered coldly,—

"It is my firm belief that she is now in eternity; it really is, and your grieving will never bring her back."

From this time he showed but little interest upon the subject, beyond a desire to clear himself of any complicity in the matter. On the tenth day, when as yet no information had been obtained, he came suddenly into the room where the family were sitting sad and sorrowful, and said,—

"Mrs. Ring, are you willing Hope should go with me to the police authorities to say what she can in my favor?"

Raising her eyes, full of sorrow and reproach, to his, she rose slowly from her chair as though unable to believe the evidence of her own senses, and in a painfully suppressed voice pronounced the single word,—

"Levi!"

In the expression of that single word there was comprised all the agony and despair of an injured and almost broken heart. As she stood thus, pale as marble, bowed down by the weight of her great

sorrow, her silence was a more bitter reproof to him than the loudest accusations her lips could have uttered. He knew that she had given him a refusal, but he was not thus easily to be discouraged, and continued,—

“Are you willing she should go with me to my brother’s?”

“No, Hope has ever believed thee innocent, which I am very far from doing; and the public are aware that thee has been suspected of having knowledge upon the subject.”

He replied in a sharp and angry tone, “I have friends as well as you, and can prove my absence from the house so short that I have nothing to fear beyond the loss of my reputation, which I can live without, if needs be.”

CHAPTER XXXII.

MANHATTAN WELL.



FEW years previous to the date of this history, there had dawned upon the minds of some public-spirited individuals an idea that it would be possible, and quite practicable, to supply the city of New York with water from some source beyond the city limits. It is said that “coming events cast their shadows before,” and we presume this was the foreshadowing of the fact that in 1837 the great city of whose infancy we have spoken should receive its supply of water from the placid lake that lies far away among the green hills that make beautiful the borders of the Hudson. It was discussed at length how this could best be done, and whence the supply obtained; and after much profound thought upon the stupendous undertaking, it was decided to dig a well upon a certain springy piece of ground far away from the thickly inhabited por-

tion of the city, and beyond where it was then anticipated it would ever extend. The spot selected was in a lonely, secluded neighborhood, with here and there a house, surrounded by a little garden such as we see in the country now-a-days. There was a road running near it—a narrow, quiet, country road, where the grass grew in summer, and children went to gather berries from the bushes that grew along its sides. The well was dug, and I suppose we may think of Manhattan Well, as it was then called, as the foreshadowing of Croton Lake. For some reason, unknown to us, the undertaking was abandoned, and nothing beyond the digging of the well was ever accomplished. The neighborhood was so secluded that there was no danger apprehended from leaving the place without a curb, or any safeguard beyond a few boards thrown loosely over it, though it was very deep and pretty well filled with water. Accordingly it was covered up in this temporary manner, and left for the time being.

Were you to ask me now to give you the exact location of this well, I should tell you to go to the corner of Spring and Greene Streets, and, being there, you might feel assured that you were in the immediate neighborhood, possibly upon the very

spot where the waters of the Manhattan Well rose seventy years ago.*

In one of the pretty, cosey little houses that stood near this well lived a dressmaker. We have forgotten her name, if we ever knew it, but as we may speak of her again, we will, for convenience sake, call her Miss Jones. Minnie Marston was one of her customers, and on the third of January, 1800, having occasion for the services of this useful per-

* Since the above was written the exact location has been discovered, and the following article appeared in many of the daily journals early in April, 1869:

"A few days ago the occupant of the building, No. 115 Spring street, while digging in his garden, discovered an ancient well of large diameter, partly filled with earth. It had been partly covered with large flat stones, and is the old well known as the 'Manhattan Well,' in which was thrown the corpse of Gulielma Sands, murdered in the year 1799, for which murder, one Levi Weeks was tried and acquitted. The accused person was defended by Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr, and Edward P. Livingston. The young girl lived with her cousin, and was last seen in the company of Weeks on a winter's evening, as she left the house on his invitation to take a sleigh-ride. He escaped by a break in the chain of the testimony of the cousin, who, although she saw them together leave the front door, did not see them enter the sleigh before it. Public sentiment, however, condemned the accused, and he disappeared from the society of the city. It has been known by a few old residents that the well still existed in that neighborhood, but its exact whereabouts was not discovered until Monday last."

sonage, Minnie had gone to her house for the purpose of engaging her to come to them upon the following day. While there, another lady came in upon the same errand, and in the course of conversation she remarked to the dressmaker that her son had been playing near the well yesterday, and seeing that the boards which covered it had been disturbed, his childish curiosity was aroused, and putting his eye to the opening between the boards he discovered a muff floating upon the surface of the water. With the assistance of older boys he removed a small portion of the covering and hooked up the muff, which he brought home. It was a very pretty one, she said, and had the letters S. D. marked upon the lining. The dressmaker wondered how it could have come there, and supposed maybe some one had stolen it and was afraid of being found out, and had put it in the well a little while for safe keeping.

Minnie listened without joining in the conversation; and, as soon as they had finished speaking upon the subject, she left, with a brief injunction to Miss Jones to be punctual on the morrow. She proceeded at once to the house of Friend Ring, and, being admitted by Judy, she asked for Mrs. Ring. It was one o'clock,—in those days people dined at one,—and the family were at dinner.

Judy opened the dining-room door, and, with a significant nod to her mistress, closed it again, so noiselessly that any one who did not see her would not have believed that the door had been opened. She had a vague idea of the mystery in which matters were enveloped, and her own movements were as mysterious as the wanderings of a ghost.

Thus summoned, Cousin Catharine rose and left the room. Judy met her outside the door, and informed her that "Miss Maston" was in "de parlor." She was in constant excitement and expectation of hearing something of 'Elma. It was now twelve days that she had been gone; and not the slightest hint or suspicion of where she was had as yet reached them. She entered the drawing-room hastily, and, taking Minnie's hand, asked, in a voice tremulous with excitement,—

"Has thee learned anything of my child?"

"No; but it is with the hope of learning something of her that I am here."

"Alas! there is nothing — nothing to tell."

Minnie related what she had heard from the lady she met at the dressmaker's; but, in her excitement, she had forgotten the name that was marked inside the muff. While they were speaking, Levi passed through the hall, and went out at the street door.

Cousin Catharine instantly informed her husband of what she had heard, and he set out at once for the well, accompanied by four of his most intimate friends and neighbors,—Mr. Lent, Mr. Page, Mr. Banks, and Mr. Watkins, by name. Arrived at the spot, they removed the temporary covering of the well, and, taking each a long pole with a hook attached to the end, they put them down, *and instantly drew up the body of 'Elma*. Her beautiful hair was hanging in tangled masses about her neck and shoulders, her bonnet had fallen back, her shawl was gone, there were no shoes upon her feet, and her dress was torn almost entirely off. There were marks of violence about her neck and shoulders, her hands were bruised, and the skin torn from her fingers, as though there had been a violent struggle to overcome her terrible fate.

It was supposed she had been twelve days in this place, yet her countenance was natural and almost lifelike. Several persons had assembled at the well, having got news that it was likely she would be found there; and officers were immediately despatched to bring Levi.

After Friend Ring had started for the well, Levi came into the house, and going to Cousin Catharine, asked in an excited manner,—

“Have you heard anything? Has she been found?”

To which she replied, briefly,—

“I have heard enough.”

Already he seemed struck with fear and trembling, and rushed wildly to the door. As he opened it the officers met him, and, laying hands upon him, made him prisoner.

“Why do you interfere with me?” he said, endeavoring to shake them off. “What charge is brought against me?”

Then, as now, the officers of the law spent but little time in giving explanations, and to his question the elder of the two replied,—

“We expect you are not ignorant of the charge.”

Turning deadly pale, and trembling in every limb, he asked,—

“Is she found?”

“Yes.”

“Where?”

“In a well,” they answered.

“In the Manhattan?”

“We expect you know,” was the reply, and they spoke no more until they reached the spot, where a crowd was assembled, and the dead body of 'Elma lay with upturned face upon the snow.

They took him to her side, and compelled him to

look upon her, asking him if he knew that face. In a cold and careless tone, he replied, —

“I know the dress.”

Whereupon Friend Ring approached him, and looking into his face, said, in a sad and solemn voice, —

“*Levi, it is 'Elma!*”

The sound of her name thus spoken, and the scene before him, was overpowering. His strength gave way, and exclaiming, wildly, “This is too much!” he wept loud and bitterly.

The crowd had prejudged him, and it was with difficulty the officers could keep them off. They would have torn him to bits had he been given over to them.

The city was not such a great wicked place then as it is now, with its imported criminals, accomplished and perfected in guilt of every description. It was comparatively innocent, and this was among the first notable crimes that were committed within its limits. We presume there was not a family in the city that night in which the circumstances which we have related were not discussed.

Levi was taken to prison, or *Bridewell*, as the place of confinement was then called. We have a more appropriate name in 1869, whereby to designate the place for criminals such as he was accused

of being. When he had been taken away, and the coroner's brief duties performed, a conveyance was brought, and the body of 'Elma being placed in it was taken home, followed by hundreds who gathered as the news spread. Words cannot describe the excitement that prevailed. Those who had not yet been able to get near enough to see her, rushed into the house, and crowded and crushed each other in their efforts to get sight of the body, and pronounced the most terrible maledictions upon Levi, whom they accused loudly and bitterly of being her murderer. When their curiosity had been gratified in a great measure, the house was cleared, and the family was left alone with its dead. Then Cousin Catharine and Hope went to look upon all that remained of her whose gentleness and excellence had so won their hearts. They had taken her to her own room, and placed her upon the bed where she had so lately rested in health and happiness. Hope's grief knew no bounds; she called upon her in all the endearing names by which she had been used to pet her, and having exhausted herself by grief and tears, her strength gave way, and she was taken from the room exhausted and fainting.

Cousin Catharine's grief took quite another form. Silent and pale as marble, she sat beside the melancholy remains, holding the poor bruised hands

within her own, tearless and comfortless in her sorrow. She had loved 'Elma as her own child, and as such she mourned for her. She was sitting thus when Judy came up, and without the usual ceremony of rapping entered the room. She had gathered the story, in part, from one of her own color who was among the crowd, and accepted the idea without hesitation that Levi was the perpetrator of the dreadful deed. When she saw the lifeless body of 'Elma, and her mistress sitting beside it stricken and paralyzed by grief, she fell upon her knees beside the bed and poured forth her full heart in words.

"Oh missus, missus, what am dis dat am come upon us now? O Miss Almy, to tink we'll neber hear her voice agin. How offen Judy sed in'er own mind, Take care 'Miss Almy' dat he don't 'ceive de little lamb wid he smooove coat: and now he's bin and gone and done it. Dear chile; darlin' ob dis poor brack heart; she neber teased and worried me like some folks do. She was de lubliest, gentlest, most consideratest; and to tink dat winemous serpent creep into her innocent bosom and guiled her out into de lonely night to take away de life what de good Lor' gib her. O Judy! why didnt de Lor' take you? den nobody wouldn't a-cried der eyes out, and break der hearts grei-

bin ober it. Oh good Lor', dear Lor', prease take Judy now, and let Miss Almy come back. Nothin' ain't no use wid her gone, but de worl' ud be jis as bright widout Judy. Sen' back de light ob de house, dear massa, and take dis poor brack body to hide in de dark grabe. Judy ain't afeared ob de lonesome night, and de cold groun', but young Misses so timid, and de worl' so dark like widout her. O Missus, he'll neber gib her back, he'll neber, neber, gib her back; but jis hab his own way and keep Miss 'Almy, 'cause she too good to be wasted on dis wicked worl', and he lef' her jis long enough to show us what de angels in heaben am like."

The warm-hearted creature had exhausted all her powers of language, and knelt at the bed-side sobbing as though her heart would break. Her mistress spoke to her kindly, soothing her grief, and assuring her that 'Elma could never come to them, but they might one day go to her. Meanwhile her own eyes were dry, though her heart was overflowing with the bitterness of her affliction. Thus the generous soul strove to dispense comfort to another, when that other was not capable of touching even the far off-fringe of her own great sorrow.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

TO THE GRAVE.

WE will leave the mourners alone with their dead, and return to Levi.

It is the evening of the second day of his imprisonment. He is sitting alone in his dreary cell, and his countenance is pale and anxious. His eyes are restless, and wander constantly from one point to another, as if in momentary expectation of something or some one. His hands are clasped so tightly that the blood has ceased to circulate, and the knuckles are swollen and discolored. He raises them in wild fury to his brow, and mutters indistinctly. The voice is harsh and cold, and the miserable lamp that casts a grey shadow over his pallid face, shows it wholly absorbed by the mysterious expression that Cousin Catharine has so often striven to define. Suddenly he rises, and totters feebly to the door, listening, with head bent forward, to catch the first faint sound of approaching footsteps. His form is bent, and shaking

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as though the weight of years had fallen upon him in a single day. Through the gloom and silence there came a sound; the rustling echo of a footstep; faint, very faint at first, but approaching slowly. He places his ear to the door, and listens as though every other sense were absorbed in that of hearing. Nearer, nearer; now the sound of footsteps falls distinctly on his ear, and with disappointment unmistakably written upon every feature, he turns away, and pacing the length of the shadowy cell he mutters as he retreats into its darkest corner, "It is not he! Willetts, will you desert me now?"

In a moment more a key is placed in the lock, is turned; the door swings open, and instead of Will letts, whom he had evidently been expecting, there entered two aged men; the door closed behind them, and he stood face to face with the two neither of whom he had ever looked upon before. They approached him, and one after the other offer him their hand. He looked half doubtful at first, and as though he would decline the offer of civility, but the elder of the two seeing his hesitation spoke kindly to him, saying, "We are thy friends, and would do thee good." The tone of kindness overcame him, and his burning eyes, which had known no sleep since he had been brought into this comfortless place, were misty and damp with tears.

He spoke freely of his unfortunate position, and before they left him the visitors almost feared that he would confess his guilt, which they did not desire him to do in their presence alone. He seemed subdued and humiliated, as though he felt the full measure of the degradation under which he was resting. When they had talked for an hour, one of the visitors asked him if he would not like to go and look at 'Elma, now that she was prepared for and soon to be laid in the grave. He made no reply, but covered his face and wept bitterly. They then told him that it was the desire of many that he should go and lay his hand upon her; there being at that time a belief among many people, that if a murderer placed his hand upon his victim the blood would follow his touch and proclaim his guilt.

"If thee is innocent," they said, "thee need not refuse, no matter how preposterous the superstition."

He sprang to his feet, and in loud and angry tones refused to go with them, saying, —

"I will do nothing to gratify public curiosity."

When they found their repeated entreaties unavailing, they left him to his solitude, and the bitter reflections of his own mind, and returned to the scene of sorrow from which they had come to make this request.

The public mind was so excited, that thousands

surrounded the house where the body of 'Elma lay, and some brought ladders and attempted to obtain entrance through the upper windows. Officers were constantly on guard, and it was only through the promise that all should have an opportunity to look upon the unfortunate girl before she was consigned to her last resting-place, that the crowd were induced to restrain their curiosity, and forbear their efforts to throng the house. Meanwhile, 'Elma lay peacefully sleeping, with the terrible secret locked in the heart that should never hear or heed the voice of human love or fear again.

On the third day it was appointed to bury her. Friends assembled, and the last sad duties were performed; but when they came to take the farewell look she was so life-like, and the desire to keep her yet a little longer was so strong, that it was decided to defer the burial until the morrow morning.

There was constantly a hope and expectation that something might transpire to illumine the great mystery that hung about her cruel and melancholy fate.

On the following morning she remained unchanged in appearance, though sixteen days had passed since her disappearance and probable death. Her cheeks were flushed with the hue of health, and her whole appearance was life-like and beautiful.

Another delay was decided upon, and on the fifth day after the recovery of her body,—being seventeen days after her death, the final arrangements were made for burying her.

The crowd outside demanded that the body should be placed at the threshold, that they might pass by in order, and have an opportunity of seeing it. Accordingly the litter bearing the coffin was placed upon the sidewalk, guarded by officers and friends, and the multitude passed by, each one in his turn looking down upon the beautiful face, that even the terrible death she had died had failed to mar. Many of the women cast flowers upon the coffin as they passed, and one rough, hard-handed man, who looked as though his struggle in the battle of life might have quenched the last embers of his love for the beautiful, stooped down and placed a pure white rose upon her bosom, and as he did so, one great honest tear fell and found a resting-place in its fragrant heart.

Ah, 'Elma, there were tears shed that day over thy cruel and untimely fate by eyes all unused to weep; and hearts—that years ago had ceased to sigh over their own hard fortune—swelled with honest grief as they passed thee by, and thought upon thy youth and beauty, blighted ere thy sun of life had reached midway the morning horizon.

When public curiosity had been gratified, and the last of the vast multitude had passed by silently and reverently, the feeling of indignation and desire for revenge could no longer be restrained; and there burst from the crowd a wild and furious cry that went ringing out upon the clear, frosty air, and trembled away, fainter and fainter, until to all appearance the sound thereof had ceased to be: yet well we know that through all time that cry will go journeying on through the interminable fields of space, and that somewhere in the mysterious regions of surrounding spheres there is being repeated to-day the fearful cry that rose from that infuriated multitude seventy years ago,—

“Bring forth the murderer! Weeks, the murderer! Give him to us, that we may deal with him as he deserves!”

The excitement raged to a fearful extent. From the house they went in a body to the prison, pronouncing the most terrible maledictions upon Levi as the murderer of her upon whose remains they had just been looking. Precautions had been taken to protect the place against invasion, and no violence was offered; but the fearful imprecations of the mob went ringing through the dismal halls and grated cells, and Levi trembled and cowered in his solitude, as he heard himself anathematised

as "Weeks, the murderer; the black-hearted murderer."

When the street was cleared, and order restored, the funeral procession proceeded on its way. Friend Ring, Cousin Catharine, and Hope followed as chief mourners. No fluttering crape or funeral weeds proclaimed that fact, but the grief that would have way, showed how very little the color of our garments controls the depth and continuance of our sorrow.

Close in the shadow of the unpretending sanctuary where she had worshipped in her life-time, they made her grave; and there, upon a small white stone of the most modest pretensions, might be read for many a year the words that registered the name and few brief years of 'Elma: but long ago the march of improvement placed its obliterating foot upon the little mound: the tablet fell and was crushed beneath its giant strides; and to-day there remains no token that speaks to us of the final resting-place of the unfortunate girl whose history we have chronicled with religious precision,

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ONE OF NINA'S PROPHECIES FULFILLED.

WHEN the last rites had been performed, and every heart had uttered in its own solemn depths the words that instinctively come to us when standing beside a newly-made grave, "Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust," the procession turned them homeward, more sad and thoughtful for the hour they had spent at the house of mourning.

When Cousin Catharine and Hope returned to their lonely and disordered home they could scarcely realize the terrible dispensation that had come upon them. Judy, with some kind hearted neighbors, had been busy during their absence endeavoring to regulate and restore the house to something like its usual order. They had succeeded in part, but there were tokens of the late terrible occurrence not so easily to be removed. When Hope went to her own room there was not an article of furniture, or any object that met her eye, but came fraught with

memories of the companion who had so lately shared with her their use. She threw herself upon the bed and gave way to the most violent weeping. She did not fear to lie upon the bed where she had seen the dead body of 'Elma, but rather clung to it, as if by this means she could come nearer to her lost friend. For a while she lay sobbing as though her heart would break; and from this she fell into thinking of the happy days and weeks they had passed together, and the memory came to her so soothingly, that after a time she fell asleep, and dreamed of 'Elma, again in health and happiness.

All the dark days of sorrow faded and vanished away, and in dream-land she wandered again with her from whom she was now separated by the dark river of death; the same light-hearted, happy child she had been ere the vail of sorrow had loosened its first sable fold to cast a sombre shadow over the young life that henceforth would turn back to this period as the time from which to date its first joys departed. She slept until Judy came up to say that tea was ready, and her sister had sent for her. She awoke refreshed, and felt a subdued, quiet restfulness pervading her heart which contrasted very strongly with the perturbed state of mind in which she had sought her chamber a few hours ago. She joined the family at supper, and there was an

evident effort on the part of each one present to be as cheerful as possible.

'Lidie had been kept as far as might be away from the general excitement. She had not been allowed to see 'Elma, and to her frequent inquiries for her it had been replied that she had gone away, and they should not see her again for a long, long time. She was too young to feel any very lasting grief, and after she had taken one good cry over the loss of her favorite, she gave it up, but often referred to the time when she should see her again, and counted the days as they passed, asking her mother frequently if it were not "*a long time*" yet, and if 'Elma would not soon return.

Minnie Marston had been a deep sympathizer in all the affliction that had fallen upon her friends, and the day after 'Elma was buried she came in to sit an hour with them, and while away a portion of the time that passed so drearily in the lonely home.

Hope was in her own room when Minnie came; she sent for her to come up and join her where they had so often sat enjoying sweet converse with the one now lost to them — no, I will not say *forever*; it is too sad a word to speak or write in connection with friends from whom we have parted; but when the separating barrier is removed, and we behold them once again, perhaps when the mysteri-

ous slumber of the grave is broken, and it is morning in that other and better world, *then* we can speak it, joyously; where there is no parting more, *forever and forever*.

Hope spoke composedly to her friend when she entered: there were no tears now, and she was changed from the romping, careless child, into a thoughtful and earnest woman. Minnie saw the change, and folding her in her arms she whispered,

"Dear Hope, give me a portion of the love that was hers, and I will strive to be worthy a place in thy heart beside her. I can never hope to fill it entirely, but I shall be better and happier for the effort to approach her standard of excellence."

"I do love thee, Minnie, for thyself, but the love that was 'Elma's can never be another's. Thy kindness is a great happiness to us now, and all that was dear to her is henceforth sacred to us. Sit down, and let's talk of her. I shall never be weary of dwelling upon the days that passed so pleasantly while we were together."

They sat down side by side, and earnestly spake of the young life that, to all human judgment, had gone out so prematurely. But who shall say that she had not filled up the full measure of her days, and faithfully carried out the programme of her fearful destiny. Nothing comes by chance, and

what we call *accident* is doubtless the careful planning of an Almighty hand; thus, when we speak of escapes, narrow and marvellous, they are neither the one nor the other, but *dispensations*, broad and unlimited as God's own providence.

When Minnie and Hope had been together for an hour, talking over the pleasant past, and lamenting the sad termination of the pure young life that had contributed so materially to their happiness, Cousin Catharine came in and joined them. 'Elma's writing-desk was standing upon the table; her cousin opened it: it was the first time she had done so, and when she saw the letters it contained, she was reminded of a duty still unfulfilled. 'Elma had given her Maude's letter to read, also the two that accompanied it; being acquainted with the contents, she did not open them, but only remarked to Hope that Maude must be written to on the morrow.

"I will write, myself," she said. "I ought to have done so before, but I shrink from inflicting the pain I know they will all feel at the terrible information I shall communicate."

She did not refer to Levi: though they all believed him guilty, there was an evident unwillingness to speak of him. Had one of their own kindred been placed in his position, they could scarcely have felt deeper grief than they did for him. Judy

was the only one who spoke unkindly of him, and she was never tired of talking—as often to herself as to any listener—of the dislike she had always had for him. When her mistress remonstrated with her for feeling so bitterly toward him before he had been proven guilty, she answered, prefacing her remarks with the usual exclamation,—

“Lor’, missus, if a body wouldn’t think you wanted to make out he was a honest man. Jis see how de chile neber could bar him; she neber tought de sugar plums was sweet when dey come out ob massa Wick’s pocket; pend upon it, missus, when de little childer turns agin a body dar’s sure to be suthin’ wrong. Ye can’t cheat de childer; de Lor’ gib ’em uncommun pinetration, and day neber make a ’stake. Dis darkey’s jis as well satisfied ob his guilt, as dough she seed him hangin’ on de gibbet dis minit. Bress de good Lor’, she hope to see him hangin’ dar ’fore long; de wicked, murderin’ willain. Forgib me, missus, for tearin’ away ’bout him, but when de heart am bustin’ wid bitter gall and wormwood, ’taint no use tryin’ to bottle it up; it ’ll bust out in spite of eberyting. Dar, I feel better now; and I won’t nebber speak ob him agin dis bressed day.”

On the third day after the funeral, Cousin Catharine undertook the melancholy task of writing to Maude. She sat with her writing materials before

her for a long time before she got beyond the heading of the letter. How should she begin? Maude would be surprised at receiving a letter from her and none from ’Elma, and would doubtless suspect that some misfortune had befallen her friend; she would open the absorbing subject at once; and, dipping her pen into the ink, she essayed to write; again she hesitated: it would be cruel to burst upon her with the awful truth, without some little preparation, yet her heart was so full of it she could not preface it by any commonplace preamble. At length she proceeded; and dictated by her own kind and loving heart, she wrote thus, setting down naught in malice, and keeping back nothing of the terrible truth:

“MY DEAR MAUDE:

“Thee is not expecting a letter from me, but I know thee is looking for one from ’Elma. Thee will be disappointed at not receiving hers, and mine, I know, will when thee has learned its contents, bring thee only sorrow. Knowing thy interest in and great love for one to whom thee has shown such disinterested kindness, I am sure that any misfortune or disaster befalling her will cause thee deep and heartfelt sorrow. Thy parents too, and Harry, have shown such interest and consideration for her

that I am sure they will be both shocked and grieved to know how sad a fate has befallen her."

[She then related all the particulars and confession of 'Elma's engagement to Levi, her mysterious disappearance and the ultimate recovery of her body, and concluded in this wise:]

"On the third day we followed her to the grave; my darling 'Elma, my faithful and loving child: the innocent victim of a cruel and heartless murderer. Whoever he be, wherever he may hide himself, the Lord knoweth him altogether, and 'vengeance is mine' saith He. Whether it be Levi, the captive in a prison-cell, or some unknown assassin who walks the earth to-day with the brand of Cain upon his brow and in his heart, God guideth his steps, and the blood that crieth to Him from the ground shall most surely be avenged.

"It would be a source of much gratification to us to hear from thee—from ye all—and I shall confidently look for a letter in due season. With kindest remembrance to thy parents and brother, I am sincerely thy friend,

"CATHARINE RING."

The letter was sealed and stamped, and on the following day it sailed out toward its destination; and with it the "*dark shadow*" was creeping over the mighty waters to seek out Harry in a foreign

land, to "*dwell*" with him, as Nina had said, and sadden all his future years. It found him at a quiet little town in Scotland, and bitter indeed was the grief he felt when its sombre and depressing atmosphere had enveloped him like a pall.

Maude did not faint when she read the letter, but sat partially stunned, not comprehending fully the dreadful truth until she had read it twice, carefully; then passing it to Harry she said, with her hand pressed tightly against her forehead,—

"Harry, what is this terrible thing? have I read aright? or is my brain crazed, that such horrors have come upon me? O 'Elma! my friend, my sister, this cannot be. Oh! tell me that I am mistaken, that it is a delusion; *anything*, only tell me it is not true."

Harry took the letter from her trembling hand and read it eagerly. He gathered its full meaning from the first rapid perusal, and raising his eyes from it to his sister's face, he said in a voice all tremulous with unshed tears,—

"Dear Maude, I cannot comfort thee: it is no delusion: these fearful words are all too true, and 'Elma is no more. To have known that she was dead from any natural cause would have been terrible enough; but thus, by violence—that gentle, timid creature, whose heart was all love and sympathy—O Heaven! it is too much."

Rushing wildly from the house he strode away, far into the silence of the heathery hills, and poured out his sorrow where no human ear was nigh to listen to his agony. He had not known his own heart until now. 'Elma was so young, and through his sister's love for her his acquaintance had been of such a nature that he had never thought seriously of the sentiments that had sprung up in his bosom almost unawares. When they were separated he was surprised to find his thoughts and affections turning back to her with an intensity which he had never suspected; and the thought of returning to her was fraught with more happiness than he experienced from all the excitement and novelty by which he was surrounded. And now to know that he could never return to her—that he could never tell her of all this deep love that had developed and strengthened since he left her until it absorbed all other things, and made her the guiding star of his future existence. Oh, how bitterly these thoughts came to him.

He hastened along recklessly until quite exhausted, then throwing himself upon a mossy rock that obstructed his further progress, he bowed his face upon his hands, and shutting out from his vision the wildly beautiful Scottish hills, his mind went back to his own far-off country, and as one

shade after another was added to his thought-picture, there was presented to his spiritual view the little lake, Glenida, with the moonlight glancing and shimmering across its rippling waters, and the branches that hang over its margin casting their shadows broad and dark, as they had done long ago, when Nina stood beneath their shade, and told him of the "dark shadow" that should follow him into a far country. He remembered it now, and with that memory there came an echo from over the sea of other words that she had spoken, and they went ringing through his brain with the bitterness of reproach. "Harm shall never come to you fair lady whilst thou art nigh; the stars tell me so, and they never deceive, as men do." Harm *had* come to her, and he had not been nigh; man had deceived, and he had not been there to warn. He thought long and bitterly of these things, and the evening was gathering grey and solemn when he returned to the dwelling where Maude and his parents were anxiously desiring his presence.

He had gained the mastery over himself, and externally was calm; but the brightest link in his existence had been severed, and beneath the calm exterior there throbbed a heart, whose pulses came up faint and muffled from amid the ashes of desolation.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE TRIAL.

THERE are seasons in every person's lifetime when there seems a perfect dearth of everything worthy of record. Seasons when the trifling incidents of each day are forming and condensing themselves into matter for great and important results; the seed-time preparatory to the rich, ripe harvest. We do not mean to say that this seed-time is less important than the harvest itself; indeed, were it not for these seasons there would be no harvest; but in its nature it is so quiet, so unexcited, so wholly made up of infinitesimals, that the historian can find nothing in detail to furnish matter for his pen; and it is only when these infinitesimals have multiplied, and in their multiplicity have culminated, and are forming themselves into results, that they become worthy of record, and furnish food for the mind and pen.

Such a season as this has been prevailing with some of the characters of whom we have written,

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and whose history we propose to resume from this point. The reader will oblige us by taking with us one of those mental leaps over time and circumstances which are so unavoidable between process and result.

It is now the thirtieth of March; nearly three months have elapsed since we saw Cousin Catharine sealing her letter to Maude, and during that time the infinitesimals have been accumulating until now they are about to burst into results that will stir the hearts of thousands.

In a gloomy prison cell, alone, at midnight, sits a young man, whose pale, thin features show that anxiety, and sleepless nights, and the thousand unrests attendant upon his terrible state of uncertainty have taken a deep and destructive hold upon his physical and nervous composition. His eyes are sunken, and the large, dark circles that surround them have the effect to make them look unnaturally large. His hair is disordered, and he is constantly passing his fingers through it and brushing it away from his forehead, as though even its trifling weight added to the load already resting upon his overburthened brain. He dips his fingers into the jug of water, that has been left for his use, and bathes his throbbing temples, hot, and almost bursting with the intensity of thought that all day long has been

crowding upon him, until the capacity of his brain is taxed almost beyond endurance; and still they come, vivid, acute, and terrible. Oh, for a draught of some somnific influence; a potion concocted by the cunning hand of science, to lay these fearful figures of the mind and give him rest! *Rest!* the word goes ringing through all his being, and is of all things earthly the most to be desired. *Rest!* will he ever know it more? the thing that, *having*, we so little prize, and *having lost*, we long for with the soul's great thirst.

Through the dreary watches of the night he paces the narrow cell, sleepless and miserable. Hour after hour goes by, and still there comes no drooping of the heavy lid betokening the longed-for approach of sleep. At length, when the shadows begin to flee away, and the gray morning is breaking without, ere any ray has penetrated the gloom of his comfortless apartment, he throws himself upon his bed, weary and heart-sick, and, without any premonitory warning, there steals over him forgetfulness of all his cheerless surroundings, and he sleeps. The body, worn and jaded, becomes insensible; but the mind, that eternal and mysterious thing, is still busy, and he dreams, and mutters of his dreaming thoughts.

Oh, for the power to look within, and know

through what scenes he is passing now! Is there a stain of blood, innocent blood, upon his soul, or has he been wrongfully accused? Is it the sense of an injustice done him, and grief at the loss of one whom he professed to hold most dear, that has so worn and wasted his manly proportions? Or is it the bitterer gnawing of conscious guilt, and the fear of ignominious punishment? The truth is known to more than one; and to-day Levi will stand at the bar of justice, to be tried for the murder of 'Elma Sands.

No expense had been spared in obtaining for him the most talented counsel that the country afforded. Cadwallader D. Colden was the prosecuting officer, and on behalf of the prisoner, Alexander Hamilton, Benjamin Livingston, and Aaron Burr appeared, — three of the most talented men of their times.

At the hour appointed for business, the Court House was filled to overflowing. Punctual to the hour came Levi, accompanied by his brother and the necessary officers. He comes with head erect; and, to see him now, none would suspect that he was the pale, trembling, wretched man who all night long has paced his dreary cell, and feared and dreaded the approach of this hour, until his whole frame seemed bowed and sinking beneath

the load of terrible anticipation. With firm and graceful tread he approaches the dock and takes his seat. With calm, unruffled countenance, he surveys the multitude, apparently regardless that every eye is fixed upon him with the deepest scrutiny. Here and there he recognizes a familiar face, and, with the coolness of assurance, he bows, and smiles as pleasantly as though he were a spectator instead of an actor in the scenes which were shortly to ensue. While he is sitting thus, during the brief delay preparatory to the business of the hour, the door opens, and every eye is turned toward it. For the moment Levi is forgotten in the greater interest of the objects now presented to view. Side by side, Friend Ring, Cousin Catharine, and Hope entered, and, slowly making their way among the crowd, approached the place appointed for witnesses. The two latter are very pale, but no hesitation or indecision marks the countenance of either. As they approach the dock their eyes encounter Levi's. They stop involuntarily, and the eyes of the multitude are turned toward the prisoner.

Now he is the man we saw last night, with head bowed upon his breast, and cheek as bloodless and as white as marble.

The sight affected the two sisters very differently.

Cousin Catharine's eyes were brimming with tears in an instant: in another, they were streaming over her cheeks, though her countenance was unruffled; and of her grief there was no sign, save the compassionate and mournful expression of her soft blue eyes, and the tears that fell from them like rain.

Hope's childish figure seemed to expand, as she stood for the moment, and the blood came boiling up into her pale cheeks until they were like crimson. Her black eyes rested upon Levi, filled and almost bursting with one intense expression of reproach; and those who sat near her could hear her breath come short and quick, as though her heart was too full to contain all that was swelling in it now.

It was an awful moment; but it lingered only its little space, and floated away into the past, laden with its terrible freight, to join the infinitesimals that make up the perfect circle of eternity.

The witnesses passed on, and were seated. The usual preliminaries were performed, and the principal witness was called to the stand. She removed her simple bonnet, and obeyed the summons. The oath was administered, and she swore by the uplifted hand to speak truth, entire and unadulterated.

Then came the close, sharp questioning, such as only shrewd and experienced lawyers know how to institute. The most trivial minutiae of the acquaintance and association between Levi and 'Elma were brought forward. The circumstances of her acknowledged engagement to him, his reason for wishing it to be kept secret for a time, her declaration that it was with him she was going out on that fatal Sabbath evening, his peculiar conduct when he returned home without her, and ultimately the sheet of paper that had been found in her room, bearing such unmistakable proof of what their intentions had been.

All their home-life, with which the reader is already acquainted, was brought forward, analyzed, expatiated upon, and scrutinized in the closest and most searching manner. For hours the patient witness stood, answering clearly and satisfactorily all the trying questions that were propounded to her, never forgetting, or hesitating in the slightest degree upon any point. Her voice might be heard, and every word distinctly understood in the furthest corner of the room. Sometimes, when speaking of 'Elma, her voice trembled, and the tears would force their way; but she conquered this by a powerful effort, and when the crowd saw how her heart was full well-nigh to bursting,

and how nobly she stood there hour after hour, never confusing or contradicting her evidence, through all the severe ordeal to which she was subjected, a murmur of approval went up from them, scarcely above a whisper, yet unmistakable in its expression.

When she had given her direct evidence, and permission was given for the cross-questioning, then came her greatest trial. In their turn the three queried and questioned her with all the shrewdness and sagacity for which they were individually so celebrated. Burr, who was so remarkable for the confusing influence he could exert over a witness, failed here. She was as composed and self-possessed beneath his searching glance as though she were looking into the mild eyes of her whose loss she was mourning so bitterly.

All the magnetic influence of that wonderful mind was brought to bear upon his subject, but it returned to him void, failing utterly to produce the slightest effect to confuse or confound the witness whom he handled so mercilessly. When she was well-nigh fainting from exhaustion, some of those who sat near her, seeing her need of something to refresh and strengthen her, peeled oranges, and dividing them into convenient por-

tions, handed them to her. She thanked them, more by expression than words, but she had no desire for food, and the substantial evidence of their kindness was left untouched when she resumed her bonnet and turned wearily toward her home.

On the following day she was again called to the stand. She was looking pale and anxious, and to have seen her when Alexander Hamilton came forward to subject her to a repetition of yesterday's scrutiny, one would have expected to see her quail, and become nervous and uncertain; but if any one there present anticipated such result, she very soon gave them reason to lay aside their fears for her self-possession and steadiness of purpose. He evidently anticipated exciting her to a degree that would throw her off her guard, and to this end asked many questions calculated to throw doubt and suspicion upon 'Elma's purity of character. To say that this did not excite her indignation would not be true, for every sense of wrong and injustice in her heart was stirred to its profoundest depths. It was the absorbing ambition of the practitioner, bound to clear his client, innocent or guilty, at the expense even of the good name of one whose life had been a lesson of purity to all who knew her. When he propounded the

first of these trying questions, the witness looked at him as if in doubt if she had heard aright. He repeated, fixing a searching glance upon her, as though quite certain that beneath it she must answer as he wished. When she had satisfied herself that he was really endeavoring to cast a stigma upon 'Elma's character, she answered him in such words, and with such expression as showed him, and every person present, how utterly lost such an attempt would be, should they see fit to put it to the proof. They had no such intention: it was only a ruse resorted to for the purpose of influencing the jurors. She spoke kindly of Levi, testifying to his universal propriety of conduct and character. No bitterness of word or tone accused him. Keeping close to the facts so conclusive in themselves, "she did nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice."

Never was clearer or more conclusive testimony given. All the ingenuity of those three remarkable men was taxed in vain, and they failed to elicit the slightest discrepancy or contradiction upon any point.

The jury were intensely interested; seeing so plain a case before them, they were carried beyond what they had any right to feel. For three days this witness was detained, and when, after her,

Friend Ring and Hope were questioned, it was only a repetition of what had already been heard; indeed, every source and avenue of information had been exhausted in the severe ordeal to which she had been subjected, and there was nothing further to learn.

The next witness called was the man Willetts: he whom our readers will remember Levi consulted in a previous chapter, as to what he would do were he deeply interested in a young lady, a union with whom was obstructed by insurmountable barriers. When 'Elma's disappearance had become publicly known, this man had revealed this much of what Levi had said to him, and intimated that there were other things to the same effect that he could testify to if necessary; consequently, he had been determined upon as a witness for the prosecution. He expressed a desire to reveal any knowledge he possessed that might tend to throw light upon the mystery, and it was anticipated that he would make some revelations that would be definite and conclusive. Thus far it had all been circumstantial; though of a forcible and convincing nature there had as yet been nothing to fix the actual commission of the crime upon the prisoner. The witnesses who had given testimony could not any one of them declare that they had seen Levi and 'Elma leave the

house together; Cousin Catharine had failed to recognize them when she looked into the street after them, and although she distinctly recognized their voices when they met in the hall, the door was closed, and she did not see them. Oh, why did she not open it and see?

Mysterious fate, mysterious world, and most mysterious life! When we have solved ye three, then, and not till then, shall we know and understand why such things are permitted to be.

Great was the consternation when it was announced that the witness required was nowhere to be found. Search was made for him, but himself and family had disappeared, and left no trace behind.

Another witness who had professed to have knowledge upon the subject was missing. A boy of fifteen, who was employed in a livery stable, had spoken such words as convinced Friend Ring and others that he knew something upon the subject, but when he was called upon as a witness he had disappeared. His employers were questioned as to his whereabouts, and denied having any knowledge of him, declaring he had left their service suddenly, without notice, and they knew nothing of him. Much search and inquiry were made, and delay occasioned, but no information was gained, and no

trace was found whereby the missing witnesses could be obtained.

Miss Jones, the dressmaker, was the next witness called. She made her appearance, looking very much frightened and very nervous. She testified that on the evening of the twenty-second of December, she was attracted by the sound of a female voice crying out piteously, "O Lord have mercy on me! O Lord deliver me!" The sound was distant, and knowing that one of her neighbors was seriously ill, and had been for some days delirious, she supposed it was this suffering woman crying out in her agony and frenzy for relief. She went to the window and listened, but the cries were not repeated; and as she raised the sash and looked out, two men were walking near the Manhattan Well, and a horse and sleigh were standing a short distance from it, the sleigh being occupied by a boy, as she judged from his size. The two men stood for a few moments, apparently conversing together; then approaching the sleigh they stepped in and were driven away. The evening was clear and the moon was shining brightly, so she could see all this very distinctly, but the figures were too distant for her to recognize them, and were they placed before her now, she did not think she could give any correct judgment as to their identity.

This, like the rest, was only circumstantial. There were few, if any, who listened to the testimony who were not convinced that Levi was the murderer. All the circumstances declared him to be so, but the jury had not decided, and they restrained themselves until he should be properly denounced.

The case was most ingeniously handled. Hamilton and Burr put forth almost superhuman efforts and ingenuity. Hamilton, in particular, exerted all his wonderful talent, and without any direct charge of impropriety, or accusation of any blemish of character, he endeavored to cast a stigma upon the purity of the murdered girl well calculated to influence both judge and jury.

The evidence had all been taken, the counsel had each one made the most of their opportunity, and nothing remained but the judge's charge to be given. In as few words as possible it was made: brief, impressive, and to the point.

The jury retired, the crowd in the court-room discussed the evidence and declared there could be but one decision. After an absence of three hours, the jury returned. Anxiously and impatiently the people had waited, fearing to leave for a moment lest the decision should be given in their absence. The judge arose and put the trying question,—

"Guilty? or not guilty?"

Every head was bent to catch the answer. To the consternation and surprise of all, it came,—

"*Not guilty.*"

As the words were uttered the countenance of Hamilton was suffused with a glow of exultation. He cast a glance toward the witness he had so vainly striven to confound; and turning to his colleagues shook them each by the hand, one with the right hand, the other with the left. Thus they congratulated each other, quietly, upon the result of their united efforts. As they did so, Cousin Catharine arose, and stretching forth her hand toward them, she stood like a priestess of fate about to pronounce some terrible doom. The crowd, seeing this, arose, and every whisper was hushed, as they listened for the words that she should speak. In a voice clear and ringing, deep and solemn with the intensity of feeling engendered by the wrong that had been offered to the memory of her lost darling, she spoke:

"*Alexander Hamilton,*" she said, "*if thee is permitted to die a natural death, I shall be brought to believe in the injustice of God!*"

She stood with her finger pointing him out, and her eye intently fixed upon him, until the great man quailed and trembled beneath her searching glance.

Who shall dare to say that he did not feel at that moment, as he stood holding the hand that was to sever the silver chord of his existence so prematurely, a foreshadowing of his own violent death? or that she was not inspired to pronounce the doom that befell him ere long? Be that as it may, we only know that the multitude shuddered as she spoke, and tears fell over many a fair face from eyes that had looked familiarly upon the features of her whose wrongs were to be left unavenged until murderer and victim should stand together before the judgment seat, where the hearts of both should be as an open book before the great Judge whose sentence should be impartial, and whose justice should be the equity of God.

The public failed to indorse the verdict of the jury; and when Levi was taken from the courthouse, he would have been executed by the crowd, had not officers been in attendance to protect him. The wildest scene prevailed when he showed himself in the street. A mob had collected, and as he passed, they shouted,—

"Down with the murderer! Weeks, the bloody murderer! He shall not go free! Give him to us, and we will find him such a gallows as he deserves!"

Sticks and stones were hurled at him, and it was

feared he would be taken by force and executed by the infuriated mob.

In course of time he was conveyed to a place of safety; and the crowd, having vented their rage and indignation in curses and the bitterest imprecations upon him and the jury who had set him at liberty, dispersed, and order was restored. But never again could Levi Weeks walk the streets of the city where he had been tried, in peace or safety. All sorts of insults were heaped upon him, and never could he show himself abroad without the cry being raised at his appearance, —

“Weeks, the murderer! Here comes Weeks, the murderer!”

Children trembled at his name; and many an unruly one was threatened to be given over to him in case of any further default in obedience. Sometimes the boys stoned him, and older ones laid violent hands upon him, and would have done him mischief had they not been prevented. His life was made so miserable that it became a burthen to him, and after a time he left the city, and under an assumed name, went to reside in the State of Kentucky. There he lived in comparative peace, and in the course of a few months married a very worthy and admirable woman. Very shortly after his marriage it was discovered who he really was,

and the scenes through which he had passed in New York were renewed to him in his present home. Crowds followed him when he showed himself in the streets, and the old cry that had all the time been ringing in his heart, rose fresh and bitter, —

“Weeks, the murderer! the bloody murderer!”

Day and night, it was ringing in his ears: whether the mob shouted it audibly, or the echo of his own heart repeated it in the silent watches of the night, it was all the same. He wandered in the woods and secluded places to avoid the excitement which his appearance in the streets invariably created; but in the silence of the forest, as in the midst of the pursuing crowd, there came to him the same fearful words, —

“Weeks, the murderer! the bloody murderer!”

The winds whispered it to the leaves in the tall tree-tops; the brook murmured it to the waving grass and tiny wild flowers that nestled to its brink to listen; the grasshopper chirped it to the humming bee, and all repeated it in chorus to the ear that should never more cease to hear it until the worn and weary brain should cease its functions, and the heart that 'Elma had called “*so strong and noble*,” should lie cold and pulseless in a dishonored grave.

The miserable life he led soon began to tell upon

him physically; he sank beneath it, and in a few years after his marriage he died, without bodily ailment, a prey to the racking tortures of a mind diseased. His wife survived him, and children inherited the name that he had made so notorious.

I used to wonder when a child if I should meet Levi at the judgment-seat, and if I could know then whether or not he were guilty of the crime whose imputation to him had so blasted and ruined him. I have not yet ceased to desire this, and sometimes picture to myself the fair maiden, cut off in her flower of youth, wandering by the crystal fountains in the eternal city, hand-in-hand with the Cousin Catharine who went to join her after the duties of a protracted and varied life-time had been well and faithfully performed. Methinks, if any memories of this life are permitted to enter there, they speak together of those days of darkness, and what then was hidden and obscure is now illumined by the sun of truth. The shadows have fled away; the morning has revealed it all, and to them there shall be no more night forever.

Judy, the affectionate and faithful servant, lay down her ripened sheaves long before her years of usefulness were passed. Her last words were, —

“Good Lor’ take care ob poor Joe, an’ lif’ up dis

dyin’ creetur to see dy bressed face in de lan’ whar her soul’ll be white an clean; whar she can see Missus, and Miss Almy, an Jack, an all de little pic-aninies what she lose, and make her a satisfied darkie when she shall see de face ob de good Lor’, caze den she’ll be like him foreber an foreber.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

TWENTY YEARS AFTER.

COME with us, reader, through the vista of shadowy years, and look again upon the city where we have associated in imagination with Levi, 'Elma, Cousin Catharine, and their cotemporaries. One would scarcely recognize it now, so rapidly has the march of improvement been striding over and transforming it in every quarter. Many of the characters with whom we were formerly familiar have passed out from this stage of action, and are performing their roles in another sphere. Let us hope they have lost nothing by the change.

Hamilton, the great and wise man, has met his doom, and the words that Cousin Catharine spoke to him on that memorable day, twenty years ago, have been remembered and quoted with reverential awe. Those who saw her when she uttered them could not but feel when they heard of his untimely fate, that the spirit of prophecy was upon her to warn him, vaguely, of the destiny that awaited him.

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Come with us to this quiet, peaceful cemetery. The moon is casting her wealth of silvery beams across it, making it a beautifully solemn spot. Here and there are long, spectral shadows falling upon it from neighboring buildings, and in one of these sombre patches, there stands a snowy tablet of uncommon beauty of material and workmanship. A female figure, carved in the solid marble, is folding an infant to her breast, and above it is a rose just unfolded into full and perfect bloom. A tiny bud is lying just beside it, and the stem from which it is supposed to have fallen stands up bare and leafless from the blossomed flower. Let's come near, and decipher, if we may, the inscription, by the faint moonlight. It is very brief, only a few words; but to us, who have known the early career of the fair young sleeper, it contains the history of a life-time. It reads thus:

Sacred to the memory of
FANNIE B. STANTON,
Wife of Frederick Stanton.
Died December the 5th, 1804,
Aged 22 years.
And their infant daughter,
MAUDE,
Aged 4 months.

This was all. Fannie had carried out her own determinations, had linked her fate with that of the adventurer, had been a disappointed wife, a feeble and fretful mother; had faded and died prematurely, and was now sleeping, with her little one folded to her heart, beneath the marble tablet that registered their names and ages. It was fitting that the shadows should fall just there. The mother had crossed over the bright sunlight of prosperity, and in the sombre twilight of affliction and disappointment had gone down to her early grave: the little one had not yet stepped out into the full light of life. So let the shadows lie upon their last resting-place; it is mete that it should be thus.

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We are going to stop for a few moments in this mansion of almost palatial pretensions. There is a picture here that has to do with our history. It is situated in the most beautiful and fashionable portion of the City of New York; the "*up-town*" of that day. In one of the drawing-rooms is collected a little party, of various ages and both sexes. It is as delightful a suggestion of domestic happiness as could be found in the most cosy cottage.

There are three persons of middle age; two gentlemen and a lady. The two former are reading, the latter is engaged in looking over a large port-

folio of engravings—views of various places of interest in different parts of Europe. A young girl of sixteen is busy arranging a quantity of sheet-music, that, from all appearance, has fallen into a sad state of disorder.

Two boys of about eight and ten years of age are playing at backgammon, and seem wholly absorbed in their occupation.

A little shade of sadness is perceptible upon the features of the matron engaged with the portfolio; it fell there when the summer blossom between the eldest of these boys and the young girl was blighted, and fell away from the wreath that made glad the mother's heart. She has had other sorrows, but none that left such traces as this.

A little sister, not old enough to understand the game, insists upon having the dice and boxes which her brothers are using, and this is strenuously objected to on the part of the little "lords of creation."

"Mamma," calls out the elder of the two, "call Minnie, please; she is teasing us and interrupts our game. She is always a little tease."

"You must not be so impatient with your little sister, master Cevillian," the mother replies, as she takes the little culprit upon her knee and presses the curly head to her bosom. The little one's feel-

ings are touched, and, half crying, she lisps out in her childish way, what to her seems the bitterest reproach to the offender, —

“Brother Cevillian don’t love Minnie, but sister ’Elma do. Mamma, tell us about the aunty that had the same name as sister ’Elma.”

The music is dropped in an instant, and sister ’Elma adds her entreaties to Minnie’s for a story of the Aunt ’Elma for whom she was named. As this request is made, one of the readers lays aside his book, and seems to have caught the spirit of the children.

“Yes, Maude,” he says, “let’s speak of her to-night; it will bring back the days when we were younger,” “*and happier*,” his heart whispered, but his lips did not syllable the words. Yes, Harry, *you* were happier, but for Maude and Philip there has been no change, unless, indeed, time has strengthened and intensified the love that since their youth has known no diminution. The heart that is once made desolate, as thine was made, can know no renewing of the love that blossometh but once. To see the kindly deeds which thou art daily doing, no one would suspect that the heart from which such things emanate was full of desolate chambers, inhabited only by spectres of the

past, that point thee back to the days of youth, and whisper sadly, “*It might have been.*”

From this picture we will flit away to the green fields that are lying fair and warm in the summer sunshine.

The hay-makers are at work, and the odor of newly-cut grass comes gratefully and soothingly to the senses as it is tossed hither and thither by the numerous laborers. Here, in this great meadow, the grass has been cut and spread out in the sun to dry; it has had one day of heat and sunshine, and now it must be tossed up and scattered about so that every blade shall have its share of air and sunlight.

A merry company have assembled to take part in this pleasant work. There are hard, strong men, who go at it with the evident determination to make a short job of it; but here, in this corner, there are those who have come out for health and pleasure; and the merry peals of laughter that are ringing from the younger members of the party, show unmistakably that the latter object is already attained. They tumble, and toss, and bury each other in the fragrant hay, and make great bundles of it to hurl at their neighbors, who come out with portions of it clinging to them in every direction.

The burly farmer is looking on, and laughing

great, hearty peals, such as only lungs like his are capable of uttering. His wife, a rugged, rosy woman of forty, is not less pleased than himself; and as she turns to the slender, delicate matron, who is leaning upon the arm of her genial-faced and noble-looking husband, she exclaims,—

“There now, Minnie, that’s how we do things up our way. One sich romp as that’ll do that pale-faced gal of yours more good than a hull year of mincin’ along as they do in the streets of New York, when they go out to git *exercise*, as they call it. ’Taint worthy of the name of exercise. My boy ’Zekial was the puniest child you ever see, and if it hadn’t bin for the barn-yard and hay-field, he’d a bin in his grave to-day. Cevillian, what do you say to leavin’ that gal with me a while? If you will, I’ll send her back to you as fresh as a summer cabbage, just as sure as my name was Mary Ann Marston, afore I changed it off for Mrs. ’Zekial Smith.”

The summer is passed, the harvest is ended, and the beautiful, sunny days of autumn have given place to the merciless storms and withering frosts of winter. Upon the site of the present City Hall, there stood in the days of which we write, a building known as the Almshouse. It was occu-

pied by every form of wretchedness and destitution. Beggared childhood and crippled old age, were huddled together in an indiscriminate mass. In a small, upper room of this receptacle of poverty and imbecility, there lay the thin, wasted figure of a man who was evidently fast approaching the final hour. An elderly woman was sitting near him, and in her hand she held a Bible, from which she had been reading aloud. She had been the nurse and faithful attendant of this patient for years; and had been told when she entered upon the duties of the situation that her predecessor had died in the service. The man had occupied that room for twenty years. Never since the present nurse had taken charge of him had she seen his mind so clear and rational as it was that night. He was a lunatic: perfectly harmless, but hopelessly insane. That night the shadows seemed to be clearing away from the darkened mind, and he spoke in words so calm and reasonable that the patient creature who for years had listened to his senseless mutterings, murmured to herself, “It’s all over now, I knowed his mind would come back to him afore the sperit took its flight, and thank God it’s come at last.” “Betsey,” whispered the feeble voice, “Betsey, come nearer to me; I’ve got something to say to you.”

Trembling with surprise at the great change that had come over him, she approached the bed, and took the wasted hand that lay cold and damp upon the counterpane, between her own warm palms.

"What is it, James," she said, "that troubles you?"

"O God! I cannot die until I have told this thing that is always haunting me. Betsey, send for a minister; do, quick, or it will be too late. *Anyone*, only let some one hear what I've got to tell. I can't die till it's told. O, God! I hear her scream! The poor young lady. How she begged and prayed that I would help her, and I did not. I *dared* not; they would have killed me, too."

Betsey stepped to the door, and called in the keeper who was passing at the moment. As he entered, the dying man raised himself, and stretching his feeble arms toward heaven, as if in supplication for mercy, exclaimed,—

"I am the one who drove the horse and sleigh when Miss Sands was killed. I am the one. I am the one. Her hands were bruised by Weeks kicking them loose from the sleigh. She tried to save herself, but they were too strong for her. Oh, the poor girl; how she struggled, and prayed

for mercy; but they would not hear her, and the two men threw her into the well while she was saying her prayers. 'O God, have mercy upon me!' she cried. 'Good Lord, deliver me!' These were her last words. They threatened and frightened me so that I dared not tell. And now—and now—"

A terrible spasm convulsed the dying creature, and when it passed away, the spirit had departed. The witnesses who had listened to his dying words believed that the secret of his mysterious life was solved, and that from the hour that 'Elma was murdered, his mind, naturally weak and timid, had given way. He had been at once conveyed to the Almshouse, kept in secret, and attended by a private nurse for twenty years. Thus time and circumstance lay bare the most cunningly devised schemes; and the dying hour oft-times reveals secrets that have baffled the skill and cunning ingenuity of the most profound and searching minds.

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In a small, neat cottage in the State of New Jersey, near to the banks of the romantic little river that winds itself in graceful meanderings through meadow and forest-land, there sat, supported by cushions and pillows, an invalid, whose

worn and wasted features were lighted up by eyes that burned and glowed as though the fire of the brain was scorching through, and would soon consume the miserable remnant that remained of the once vigorous and happy man. His wife, an enduring, patient-looking creature, was preparing a tumbler of some medicated potion which he seemed anxious to receive. She passed it to him; he grasped it with trembling hand, and having drained it, exclaimed, —

"Now, mother, send for him. I cannot last much longer, and this is the only unfinished work I have to trouble me. O God! it is enough! To die were a little thing, were it not for this. *Now*, I *know* that the sting of death is sin."

He lay back in the chair exhausted. The good woman tenderly chafed his hands, and bathed his forehead with cool water to revive him. Gazing up into her face with an expression of intense desire, he whispered, —

"*Send!*"

"I have sent, long ago," she replied. "He must be here very soon."

He smiled upon her, and the weary lids closed, as though he would fain shut out external things, and commune with the spirit, that he well knew must shortly take its flight to the unknown regions that

lie beyond the river of death. When he had lain thus quietly for a short time, the silence of the chamber was broken by the sound of approaching footsteps. His quick, expectant ear caught it in an instant, and opening his eyes, he said, —

"'Tis well: he has not come too soon."

As he finished speaking the door opened, and there entered a venerable-looking man, with hair all thinned and frosted by the lapse of years, and a face that made one think of the ten commandments, so suggestive was it of all that was kind and just.

"Well, neighbor," he said, taking the sick man's hand, "the flesh is bad enough, I see; how is it with the spirit? No matter that the outer tabernacle fall into decay, if only the inner man is strengthened, and stand fast by the eternal anchor."

The old man paused for a reply, but the only answer that came was the convulsive sobbing of the unhappy man whose days on earth were so rapidly drawing to a close. Seeing his excited state, the visitor asked, —

"Is there anything I can say or do to comfort thee? anything to serve thee, temporally, or spiritually?"

"Yes," whispered the dying man. "Listen. Years ago, many years, there came a stain upon my soul that is resting there dark and unabsolved to-day. I

have tried many times to speak of it to you, but when I approach that subject it comes to me like a fury; it's coming now; the demon that taunts and fights me back from heaven. O God! it is too true! think not I rave; the agony is approaching! Would to God, it were a delusion! but it is truth, *truth!* as I am a dying man it is truth. I know all about it! I helped to put her in the well. I was poor then, very poor! Weeks was to give me money for assisting him! the money tempted me, and I yielded. I was at the well when he brought her there in a sleigh. I did not murder her; but, together, we threw her in, and covered it over with the boards to stifle her cries for help. Her hands were bruised and wounded by Weeks' kicking them loose from the sleigh. The boy who drove it was frightened, and we thought he had fainted; he was young and innocent. I did not murder her, but I helped to throw her in the well. I did not murder her! *I did not murder her!*"

The last words were uttered in a fearful scream. In a spasm of agony he rose and stood upon his feet. His eyes rolled wildly, and the blood that for so long had moved with slow and feeble tide, seemed bursting from his crimson face. He repeated,—

"I did not murder her, I say! *who says* I murdered her?"

He stood looking wildly upon his companions for a moment, his bony hands clenched in his lank, gray hair, and his breath coming quick and painfully; then the paroxysm passed, and he fell back into his former feeble state. It was the last effort of expiring nature; and, before the morning dawned, *Willett's* was a corpse. Thus the evidence of the two missing witnesses was given at last.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

SIXTY YEARS AFTER.

WAR, fierce and cruel, was scourging our great republic. Divided against itself, the world stood aghast and awaited the result. Hearts and homes were made desolate, as their loved ones fell before the cruel sword, or more devouring cannon. It was the day after the battle of Fair Oaks, and the hospitals were crowded with the wounded and the dying. Upon one of the bier-like beds there lay a youth whose sands of life were well-nigh run. A bullet had entered his left shoulder and penetrated the lungs, and no surgeon's skill was equal to the task of ministering successfully to his necessities. His hours were numbered, and he lay painfully breathing out the young life that had been offered a willing sacrifice upon his country's sacred altar of liberty. As he moaned in his great agony, there bent over him a female figure. She was not young, nor beautiful, and yet at that moment her countenance was heavenly with the moth-

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erly expression of kindness that suffused it as she stooped to moisten the parched lips, and whisper words of comfort—*eternal comfort*—to the dying boy.

"You are so kind," he said, "I almost could think my own dear mother was soothing me; alas! I shall never feel her soft hand upon my brow again. But you will tell her how it was! it is a great comfort to know that."

He closed his eyes, and at the thought of the lonely mother who would watch and wait for him in vain, the big tears rose up from the manly heart that through all the battle had not felt one thrill of fear or weakness. The nurse stood just where the light fell full upon her, and as the evening sun sent in a ruddy glow she made a picture worthy the pencil of a Raphael.

Her plain, black dress was relieved by a leas neckerchief of snowy whiteness, and a plain, high-crowned cap of the same material gave her the appearance of being very tall, and added to the natural dignity of her presence. Her eyes were black and sparkling, and her countenance was full of character, such as is gained only by free and constant intercourse with the world. Her life had been an eventful one, and her face was an interesting

study to those skilled in deciphering the lines traced by the finger of time.

A feeble voice whispered from the couch, and in an instant the kind nurse stooped to catch the faintest word.

"Forgive me for being curious in an hour like this," he said, "but you have been so kind, I want to take your name with me when I go. Will you tell it me?"

"It is *Hope*," she answered; "thee may call me *Hope*."

Reader, it was our little friend Hope; hale and hearty still, and ministering in the Master's name.

The silver chord is still unbroken. And to-day,* three generations,—her children and children's children cluster around her declining years. The heart that was so merry in childhood, is merry still, only subdued and chastened, patiently waiting for the summons to "*come up higher*."

* December 15th, 1869.

THE END.