

# MLISS:

AN

## IDYL OF RED MOUNTAIN.

*Best Edition - 1st ed.*

A STORY OF CALIFORNIA IN 1863,

AS REPRINTED FROM THE "GOLDEN ERA," OF SAN FRANCISCO  
CALIFORNIA, AND THE "WEEKLY MERCURY,"  
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# MLISS.

## A STORY OF CALIFORNIA IN 1863.

### CHAPTER I.

#### SMITH'S POCKET.

Just where the Sierra Nevada begins to subside in gentler undulations, and the river grows less rapid and yellow, on the side of a great red mountain stands "Smith's Pocket." Seen from the red road at sunset, in the red light and the red dust its white houses look like the outcroppings of quartz on the mountain-side. The red stage topped with red-shirted passengers is lost to view half a dozen times in the tortuous descent, turning up unexpectedly in out-of-the-way places, and vanishing altogether within a hundred yards of the town. It is probably owing to this sudden twist in the road that the advent of a stranger at Smith's Pocket is usually attended with a peculiar circumstance. Dismounting from the vehicle at the stage office the too-confident traveler is apt to walk straight out of town under the impression that it lies in quite another direction. It is related that one of the tunnel men, two miles from town, met one of these self-reliant passengers with a carpet-bag, umbrella, New York Mercury, and other evidences of civilization and refinement, plodding along over the road he had just ridden, vainly endeavoring to find the settlement of Smith's Pocket.

The settlement of Smith's Pocket owed its origin to the finding of a "pocket" on its site by a veritable Smith. Five thousand dollars were taken out of it in one-half hour by Smith. Three thousand dollars were expended by Smith and others in erecting a flume and in tunneling. And then Smith's Pocket was found to be only a pocket, and subject like all other pockets to depletion. Although Smith pierced the bowels of the great red mountain, that five thousand dollars was the first and last return of his labor. Then Smith went into quartz mining. Then

into quartz milling. Then into hydraulics and ditching, and then by easy degrees into saloon-keeping. Presently it was whispered that Smith was drinking a great deal; then it was known that Smith was a habitual drunkard, and then people began to think, as they are apt to, that he had never been anything else. But the settlement of Smith's Pocket, like that of most discoveries, was happily not dependent on the fortune of its pioneer, and other parties projected tunnels and found pockets. So Smith's Pocket became a settlement with its two fancy stores, its two hotels, its one express-office and its two first families. Occasionally its one long straggling street was overawed by the assumption of the latest San Francisco fashions, imported per express, exclusively to the first families; making outraged nature in the ragged outline of her furrowed surface look still more homely, and putting personal insult on that greater portion of the population to whom the Sabbath with a change of linen brought merely the necessity of cleanliness without the luxury of adornment. Then there was a Methodist church, and hard by a monte-bank, and a little beyond on the mountain side, a graveyard; and then a little school-house.

"The Master," as he was known to his little flock, sat alone one night in the school-house, with some open copy-books before him, carefully making those bold and full characters which are supposed to combine the extremes of chirographical and moral excellence, and had got as far as "Riches are deceitful," and was elaborating the noun with an insincerity of flourish that was quite in the spirit of his touch, when he heard a gentle tapping. The woodpeckers had been busy about the roof during the day and the noise did not disturb his work. But the opening of the door and the tapping continued from the inside, caused him to look up. He was slightly startled by the figure of a young girl, dirty and shabbily clad. Still her

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great black eyes, her coarse, uncombed, lustreless black hair falling over her sunburned face, her arms and feet streaked with the red soil, were all familiar to him. It was Melissa Smith—Smith's motherless child.

What can she want here, thought the master. Everybody knew "Miss," as she was called, throughout the length and height of Red Mountain. Everybody knew her as an incorrigible girl. Her fierce, ungovernable disposition, her mad freaks and lawless character, were in their way as proverbial as the story of her father's weaknesses, and as philosophically accepted by the townsfolk. She wrangled with and fought the schoolboys, with keener invective and quite as powerful arm. She followed the trails with a woodman's craft, and the master had met her before, miles away, shoeless, stockingless and bareheaded on the mountain road. The miners' camps along the stream supplied her with subsistence during these voluntary pilgrimages, in freely offered alms. Not but that a larger protection had been previously extended to Miss. The Rev. Joshua McNagley, "stated" preacher, had placed her in the hotel as a servant, by way of preliminary refinement, and had introduced her to his scholars at Sunday-school. But she threw plates occasionally at the landlord, and quickly retorted to the cheap witticisms of the guests, and created in the Sabbath-school a sensation that was so inimical to the orthodox dullness and placidity of that institution, that, with a decent regard for the starched frocks and unblemished morals of the two pink-and-white faced children of the first families, the reverend gentleman had her ignominiously expelled. Such were the antecedents, and such the character of Miss, as she stood before the master. It was shown in the ragged dress, the unkempt hair, and bleeding feet, and asked his pity. It flashed from her black, fearless eyes, and commanded his respect.

"I come here to-night," she said rapidly and boldly, "because I knew you was alone. I wouldn't come here when them gals was here. I hate 'em, and they hates me. That's why. You keep school—don't you? I want to be teach!"

If to the shabbiness of her apparel and uncomeliness of her tangled hair and dirty face she had added the humility of tears, the master would have extended to her the usual moiety of pity, and nothing more. But with the natural, though illogical instincts of his species, her boldness awakened in him something of that respect which all original natures pay unconsciously to one another in any grade. And he gazed at her the more fixedly as she went on

still rapidly, her hand on the door-latch, and her eyes on his:

"My name's Miss—Miss Smith! You can bet your life on that. My father's Old Smith—Old Bummer Smith—that's what's the matter with him. Miss Smith—and I'm coming to school!"

"Well?" said the master.

Accustomed to be thwarted and opposed, often wantonly and cruelly, for no other purpose than to excite the violent impulses of her nature, the master's phlegm evidently took her by surprise. She stopped; she began to twist a lock of her hair between her fingers; and the rigid line of upper lip drawn over the wicked little teeth, relaxed and quivered slightly. Then her eyes dropped, and something like a blush struggled up to her cheek, and tried to assert itself through the splashes of redder soil, and the sunburn of years. Suddenly she threw herself forward, calling on God to strike her dead, and fell quite weak and helpless, with her face on the master's desk, crying and sobbing as if her heart would break.

The master lifted her gently and waited for the paroxysm to pass. When with face still averted, she was repeating between her sobs the mea culpa of childish penitence—that "she'd be good, she didn't mean to," etc., it came to him to ask her why she had left Sabbath-school.

Why had she left the Sabbath-school? Why? O, yes. What did he (McNagley) want to tell her she was wicked for? What did he tell her that God hated her for? If God hated her, what did she want to go to Sabbath-school for? She didn't want to be "beholden" to anybody who hated her.

Had she told McNagley this?

Yes, she had.

The master laughed. It was a hearty laugh and echoed so oddly in the little school-house, and seemed so inconsistent and discordant with the sighing of the pines without, that he shortly corrected himself with a sigh. The sigh was quite as sincere in its way, however, and after a moment of serious silence he asked about her father.

Her father? What father? Whose father? What had he ever done for her? Why did the girls hate her? Come, now! What made the folks say, "Old Bummer Smith's Miss" when she passed? Yes, O, yes. She wished he was dead—she was dead—everybody was dead—and her sobs broke forth anew.

The master then leaning over her, told her as well as he could, what you or I might have said after hearing such unnatural theories from childish lips; only bearing in mind perhaps better

than you or I, the unnatural facts of her ragged dress, her bleeding feet, and the omnipresent shadow of her drunken father. Then raising her to her feet he wrapped his shawl around her, and bidding her come early in the morning he walked with her down the road. There he bade her "good-night." The moon shone brightly on the narrow path before them. He stood and watched the bent little figure as it staggered down the road, and waited until it had passed the little graveyard and reached the curve of the hill, where it turned and stood for a moment, a mere atom of suffering outlined against the far-off patient stars. Then he went back to his work. But the lines of the copy-book thereafter faded into long parallels of never-ending road, over which childish figures seemed to pass, sobbing and crying to the night. Then the little school-house seeming lonelier than before, he shut the door and went home.

The next morning Miss came to school. Her face had been washed, and her coarse black hair bore evidence of recent struggles with the comb in which both had evidently suffered.

The old defiant look shone occasionally in her eyes, but her manner was tamer and more subdued. Then began a series of little trials and self-sacrifices in which master and pupil bore an equal part, and which increased the confidence and sympathy between them. Although obedient under the master's eye, at times during recess, if thwarted or stung by a fancied slight, Miss would rage in ungovernable fury, and many a palpitating young savage, finding himself matched with his own weapons of torment, would seek the master with torn jacket and scratched face, and complaints of the dreadful Miss. There was a serious division among the townspeople on the subject; some threatening to withdraw their children from such evil companionship, and others as warmly upholding the course of the master in his work of reclamation. Meanwhile, with a steady persistence that seemed quite astonishing to him on looking back afterward, the master drew Miss gradually out of the shadow of her past life, as though it were but her natural progress down the narrow path on which he had set her feet the moonlit night of their first meeting. Remembering the experience of the evangelical McNagley, he carefully avoided that Book of Ages on which that unskillful pilot had shipwrecked her young faith. But if in the course of her reading she chanced to stumble upon those few words which have lifted such as she above the level of the older, the wiser, and the more prudent—if she learned something of a faith that is symbolized by suffering, and the old light softened in her eyes, it did not take the shape of a lesson. A few of

the plainer people had made up a little sum by which the ragged Miss was enabled to assume the garments of respect and civilization, and often a rough shake of the hand, and words of homely commendation from a red-shirted and burly figure, sent a glow to the cheek of the young master, and set him to thinking if it was altogether deserved.

Three months had passed from the time of their first meeting, and the master was sitting late one evening over the moral and sententious copies, when there came a tap at the door, and again Miss stood before him. She was neatly clad and clean-faced, and there was nothing perhaps but the long black hair and bright black eyes to remind him of his former apparition. "Are you busy?" she asked; "can you come with me?"—and on his signifying his readiness, in her old willful way, she said, "Come, then, quick!"

They passed out of the door together, and into the dark road. As they entered the town the master asked her whither she was going. She replied, "To see her father."

It was the first time he had heard her use that filial expression, or indeed allude to him in any other way than "Old Smith," or the "Old Man." It was the first time in many weeks that she had spoken of him at all. He had been missed from the settlement for the past fortnight, and the master had credited the rumors of the townsfolk that Smith had "struck something rich" on the "North Fork," about ten miles from the village. As they neared the settlement, the master gathered from Miss that the rumor was untrue, and that she had seen her father that day. As she grew reticent to further questioning, and as the master was satisfied from her manner that she had some definite purpose beyond her usual willfulness, he passively resigned himself and followed her.

Through remote groggeries, restaurants and saloons; in gambling halls and dance houses, the master, preceded by Miss, passed and re-passed. In the reeking smoke and blasphemous outcries of noisy dens, the child, holding the master's hand, pursued her search with a strange familiarity, perfect self-possession and implied protection of himself, that even in his anxiety seemed ludicrous. Some of the revelers recognizing Miss, called to her to sing and dance for them, and would have forced liquor upon her but for the master's interference. Others mutely made way for them. So an hour slipped by, and as yet their search was fruitless. The master had yawned once or twice, and whistled—two fatal signs of failing interest—and finally came to a full stop.

"It's half-past eleven, Melissa," said he, consulting his watch by a broad pencil of light from an open shutter. "Half-past eleven, and it strikes me that our old friends, the wood peckers, must have gone to bed some hours ago, unless they're waiting up for us. I'm much obliged to you for the evening's entertainment, but I'm afraid that even the pretext of looking for a parent won't excuse farther dissipation. We'd better put this off till to-morrow. What do you say, Melissa? Why! what ails the child? What's that noise? Why, a pistol!—You're not afraid of that?"

Few children brought up in the primeval seclusion of Smith's Pocket were unfamiliar with those quick and sharp notes which usually rendered the evening zephyrs of that locality vocal; certainly not Miss— to have started when the report rang out on the clear night air. The echoes caught it as usual, and carried it round and round Red Mountain, and set the dogs to barking all along the streams. The lights seemed to dance and move quickly on the outskirts of the town for a few moments afterward, the stream suddenly rippled quite audibly behind them, a few stones loosened themselves from the hillside and plashed into the stream, a heavy wind seemed to surge the branches of the funeral pines, and then the silence fell again heavier, deadlier than ever.

When the last echo had died away, the master felt his companion's hand relax its grasp. Taking advantage of this outward expression of tractability, he drew her gently with him until they reached the hote, which—in her newer aspect of a guest whose board was secured by responsible parties—had forgivingly opened its hospitable doors to the vagrant child. Here the

master lingered a moment, to assure her that she might count upon his assistance to-morrow; and having satisfied his conscience by this anticipated duty, bade her good-night. In the darkness of the road—going astray several times on his way home, and narrowly escaping the yawning ditches in the trail—he had reason to commend his foresight in dissuading Miss from a further search that night, and in this pleasant reflection went to bed and slept soundly.

For some hours after a darkness thick and heavy brooded over the settlement. The sombre pines encompassing the village seemed to close threateningly about it as if to reclaim the wilderness that had been wrested from them. A low rustling as of dead leaves, and the damp breath of forest odors filled the lonely street. Emboldened by the darkness, other shadows slipped by, leaving strange footprints in the moist ditches for people to point at next day, until the moon, round and full, was lifted above the crest of the opposite hill, and all was magically changed.

The shadows shrunk away, leaving the straggling street sleeping in a beauty it never knew by day. All that was unlovely, harsh, and repulsive in its jagged outlines were subdued and softened by that uncertain light. It smoothed the rough furrows and unsightly chasms of the mountain with an ineffable love and tenderness. It fell upon the face of the sleeping Miss and left a tear glittering on her black lashes and a smile upon her lip—which would have been rare to her at any other time—and fell also on the white upturned face of "Old Smith," with a pistol in his hand and a bullet in his heart, lying beside his empty pocket.

## CHAPTER II.

WHICH CONTAINS A DREAM OF THE  
JUST ARISTIDES.

The opinion which McSnagley expressed in references to a "change of heart," as experienced by Miss, was more forcibly described in the gulches and tunnels. It was thought there that Miss had struck a "good lead." And when there was a new grave added to the little enclosure, and, at the expense of the master—a little board and inscription put above it, the Red Mountain Banner came out quite handsomely and did the correct thing for the memory of one of "our noblest pioneers," alluding gracefully to that "bane of noble intellects," touching slightly on "the vicissitudes of fortune," and otherwise assisting our dear brother into genteel obscurity

"He leaves an only child to mourn his loss," said the Banner, "who is now an exemplary scholar, thanks to the efforts of the Rev. J. McSnagley." That reverend gentleman, in fact, made a strong point of Miss's conversion, and indirectly attributing to her former bad conduct the suicide of her father, made affecting allusions in Sunday school to the beneficial effects of "the silent tomb," and in that cheerful contemplation froze most of the children into speechless horror, and caused the fair complexioned actions of the first families to howl dismally and refuse to be comforted.

Of the homes that were offered to Miss when her conversion became known, the master had preferred Mrs. Morpher, a womanly and kind-hearted specimen of effluence, known in her maidenhood as the "Per-ra-rie Rose."

By a close system of struggle and self sacrifice



ganshe had at last brought her naturally careless disposition to principles of "order," which as a pious woman, she considered, with Pope, as "Heaven's first law." But she could not entirely govern the orbits of her satellites, however regular her own movements, and her old nature asserted itself in her children. Lyeurgus dipped in the cupboard "between meals," and Aristides came home without shoes, leaving those important articles at the threshold for the delights of a barefooted walk down the ditches. Octavia and Cassandra were "keerless" of their clothes. So that with but one exception, however the "Prairie Rose" might have trimmed, pruned and trained her own natural luxuriance, the little shoots came up defiantly wild and straggling. That one exception was Clytemnestra Morpher, aged fifteen. She was the realization of her mother's most extravagant dream. I stay my hand with difficulty at this moment, for I long to describe this model of deportment, but the progress of my story just at present supplants Clytemnestra in the larger prominence it gives to another member of the family—the just Aristides.

The long dry summer had come. As each fierce day seemed to burn itself out in little whiffs of pearl gray smoke on the mountain summits, and as the upspringing breeze scattered what might have been in a red embers over the landscape, the green wave, which in early spring had upheaved above Smith's grave, grew sore and dry and hard. In those days the master, strolling in the little churchyard of a Sabbath afternoon, was sometimes surprised to find a few wild flowers plucked from the damp pine forest scattered there, and oftener rude wreaths hung upon the little pine cross. Most of these wreaths were formed of a sweet-scented grass, which the children loved to keep in their desks, entwined with the pompon-like plumes of the buckeye and syringa, the wood anemone, and here and there the master noticed the dark blue cowl of the monkshood or deadly aconite. One day, during a walk in crossing a wooded ridge, he came upon Mliss in the heart of the forest, perched upon a prostrate pine, on a fantastic throne formed by the hanging plumes of lifeless branches, her lap full of grasses and pine burrs, and crooning to the just Aristides, who sat humbly at her feet, one of the negro melodies of her younger life. It was perhaps the influence of the season, or the memory of this sylvan enjoyment, which caused Aristides, one midsummer day, to have a singular vision.

The just Aristides had begun that morning with a serious error. Loitering on his way to school, occasionally stopping to inspect the footprints of probable bears, or indulging in

cheerful badinage with the tunnel men—to whom the apparition of a short-legged boy, weighed down by a preternaturally large satchel, was an object of boisterous solicitude—Aristides suddenly found that he was an hour and a half too late for school. Whether this circumstance was purely accidental or not is a question of some uncertainty, for Aristides, on finding himself occupying this criminal attitude, at once resolved to play truant. I shall not stop to inquire by what system of logic this result presented itself to that just youth as a consistent deduction, or whether some indistinct apprehension of another and a better world beyond the settlement, where there were no schools and blackberries were plenty, had not influenced him in taking this fatal step. Enough that he entered on his rash career by instantly eating the dinner which he carried with him, and having propitiated that terrible god whose seat is every small boy's stomach, with a feeling of inexpressible guiltiness creeping over him, he turned his back upon the school-house and ran into the woods.

Retracing his steps, the truant presently came to a semicircular opening in the side of Red Mountain, which inclosed, like the walls of some vast amphitheatre, what had been the arena of the early struggles of the gladiators of fortune. There were terrible traces of that struggle still—in the rock blasted by fire—in the bank furrowed by water—and in the debris of Red Mountain scattered along the gulch two miles in extent. Their forgotten engines were lying half-buried in the ditches—the primeval structure which had served them for a banking-house was roofless, and held the hoards of field-mice and squirrels. The unshapely stumps of ancient pines dotted the ground, and Aristides remembered that under the solitary Redwood, which of all its brothers remained still standing, one of those early pioneers lay buried. No wonder that, as the gentle breeze of that summer day swept through its branches, the just Aristides might have heard, as part of his wonderful dream, some echo of its far-off brothers of Lebanon, saying:—"Since thou art fallen, no fellow has risen up against us!"

But the short legs of Aristides were aching, and he was getting thirsty. There was a rough cavern close at hand, and as most of these openings condensed their general dampness somewhere in a quiet pool, Aristides turned into the first one. When he had slaked his thirst, he looked around him and recognized Smith's Pocket.

It had undergone little change in the last two years. The winter rains had detached those portions of the wall which were not upheld by de-

caying timbers. It was certainly a dirty pocket—a pocket filled with rubbish—a shabby pocket—a worn out and ragged pocket. It was so unpromising in its present exterior, so graphic in its story of misfortune, and so terrible in its recent memories, that the most sanguine prospector would have passed it by, as though the hopeless sentence of Dante had been written over its ragged portal.

The active mind of Aristides, however, saw in the lurking shadows of its arches, much promise as a future play-room, to which he intended to induct hereafter his classical brother Lyeurgus. In this reflection he threw himself on the ground and luxuriously burying his bare feet in the cool, loose soil, gave himself up to serene meditation. But the heat and exertion were beginning to exert a certain influence over him, and once or twice his eyes closed. The water rippled beside him with a sleepy sound. The sunlight on the hill without, made him wink. The loag-drawn cawing of a crow on the opposite hillside, and the buzzing of a blue-bottle fly who had sought retreat in the cavern, had a like effect, and he felt himself falling asleep. How long he slept, or if he slept at all, he could not remember, for he started suddenly, and listening a moment sprang to his feet.

The low, heavy blows of a pick came deadened and muffled from the extremity of the cavern.

At first a terrible fear took possession of him; for an instant the white, rigid face of Smith, as he had seen it on the day of the inquest, when an irresistible curiosity led him to creep into the room where the dead man was lying—for an instant only, this fearful remembrance seemed to rise before him out of the gloom of the pit. The terror passed away. Ghosts were historically unknown to Aristides, and even had his imaginative faculty been more prominent, the education of Smith's Pocket was not of a kind to foster such weakness. Except a twinge of conscience, a momentary recollection of the evil that comes to bad boys through the severe passages of Sunday-school books—with this exception, Aristides was not long in recovering his self-possession. He did not run away, for his curiosity was excited. The same instinct which prompted an examination of bear-tracks, gave a fascination to the situation, and a nervous energy to his frame.

The regular blows of the pick still resounded through the cavern. He crept cautiously to the deepest recesses of the Pocket and held his breath and listened. The sound seemed to come from the bowels of the mountain. There was no sign of opening or ingress; an impenetrable veil of quartz was between him and the mysterious laborer. He was creeping back, between

the displaced rafters, when a light glanced suddenly in his face, and flashed on the wet roof above him. Looking fearfully down, Aristides beheld between the interstices of the rafters, which formed a temporary flooring, that there was another opening below, and in that opening a man was working. In the queer fantasy of Aristides's dream, it took the aspect of a second Pocket and a duplicate Smith!

He had no time to utter his astonishment, for at that moment an ominous rattling of loose soil upon his back made him look up, and he had barely time to spring away before a greater portion of the roof of Smith's Pocket, loosened by the displacement of its supports in his search, fell heavily to the ground. But in the fall, a long-handled shovel, which had been hidden somewhere in the crevices of the rock above, came rattling down with it, and seizing this as a trophy, Aristides emerged from Smith's Pocket, at a rate of speed which seemed singularly disproportionate with his short legs and round stomach.

When he reached the road the sun was setting. Inspecting his prize by that poetic light, he found that the shovel was a new one, and bore neither mark of use or exposure. Shouldering it again, with the intention of presenting it as a peace-offering to propitiate the just wrath of his parents, Aristides had gone but a few rods when an unexpected circumstance occurred which dashed his fond hopes, and to the conscientious child seemed the shadow of an inevitable Nemesis. At the curve of the road, as the settlement of Smith's Pocket came into view, with its straggling street, and its church-spire that seemed a tongue of flame in the setting sun, a broad-shouldered figure sprang, apparently from out of the bank, and stood in the path of that infelix infant.

"Where are you going with that shovel, you young devil?"

Aristides looked up, and saw that his interlocutor was a man of powerful figure, whose face, though partially concealed by a red handkerchief, even in that uncertain light was not prepossessing. Children are quick physiognomists, and Aristides, feeling the presence of evil, from the depths of his mighty little soul then and there took issue with the giant.

"Where are you going with that shovel—do you—do you hear?" said he of the red handkerchief, impatiently.

"Home," said Aristides, stoutly.

"Home, eh!" said the stranger, sneeringly. "And where did you steal it, you young thief?"

The Morpher stood not bemoaning of a kind to receive opprobrious epithets meekly, Aristides,

slowly and with an evident effort, lifted the shovel in a menacing attitude.

A single step was all that separated six feet of strength from three feet of valor. The stranger eyed Aristides with an expression of surly amazement and hesitated. The elephant quailed before the gad-fly. As that precious infant waved the threatening shovel, his youthful lips slowly fashioned this tremendous sentence:

"You let me pass and I won't hit you!"

And here I must pause. I would that for the sake of poetry I could leave my hero bathed in that heroic light erect and menacing. But alas, in this practical world of ours the battle is too often to the strong. And I hasten over the humiliating spectacle of Aristides, spanked, cuffed, and kicked, and pick him from the ditch into which he was at last ignominiously tossed, a defeated but still struggling warrior, and so bring him as the night closes charitably around him, in contrite tears and muddy garments to his father's door.

When the master stopped at Mrs. Morpher's to inquire after his errant pupil that night, he found Aristides in bed, smelling strongly of soap and water, and sinking into a feverish slumber. As he muttered from time to time some incoherent sentence, tossing restlessly in his cot, the master turned to those about him and asked what it was he said.

It was nothing. Yet a dream that foreshadowed a slow coming but unerring justice that should give the little dreamer in after years some credit to the title of Aristides the Just.

### CHAPTER III.

#### UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE.

It was an amiable weakness of Mrs. Morpher to imagine that of all her classical property Clytemnestra was particularly the model for Miss. Following this fallacy, she threw "Clydie" at the head of Miss when she was bad, and set her up before the child for adoration in her penitential moments. It was not, therefore, surprising to the master to hear that Clydie was coming to school, obviously as a favor to the master, and as an example for Miss and others. For Clydie was quite a young lady. In heritance her mother's physical peculiarities, and in obedience to the climate laws of the Red Mountain region, she was an early bloomer. The youth of Smith's Pocket, to whom this kind of flower was rare, sighed for her in April and languished in May. Enamored swains haunted

the school-house at the hour of dismissal. A few were jealous of the master.

Perhaps it was this latter circumstance that opened the master's eyes to another. He could not help noticing that Clydie was romantic. That in school she required a great deal of attention. That her pens were uniformly bad and wanted fixing. That she usually accompanied the request with a certain expectation in her eye that was somewhat disproportionate to the quality of services she verbally required. That she sometimes allowed the curves of a round, plump, white arm to rest on his when he was writing her copies; that she always blushed and flung back her blonde curls when she did so. I don't remember whether I have stated that the master was a young man—it's of little consequence, however; he had been severely educated in the school in which Clydie was taking her first lesson, and, on the whole, withstood the flexible curves and fascinations of the fine young Spartan that he was. Perhaps an insufficient quantity of food may have tended to this asceticism. He generally avoided Clydie; but, one evening, when she returned to the school-house after something she had forgotten—and did not find it until the master had walked home with her—I hear that he endeavored to make himself particularly agreeable—partly from the fact, I imagine, that his conduct was adding gall and bitterness to the already overcharged hearts of Clytemnestra's admirers.

The morning after this affecting episode, Miss did not come to school. Noon came, but no Miss. Questioning Clydie on the subject, it appeared that they had left the school together, but the willful Miss had taken another road. The afternoon brought her not. In the evening he called on Mrs. Morpher, whose motherly heart was really alarmed. Mr. Morpher had spent all day in search of her without finding a trace that might lead to her discovery. Aristides was summoned as a probable accomplice, but that equitable infant succeeded in impressing the household with his innocence. Mrs. Morpher entertained a vivid impression that the child would yet be found drowned in a ditch, or, what was almost as terrible, maddened and soiled beyond the redemption of soap and water. Sick at heart, the master returned to the school-house. As he lit his lamp and seated himself at his desk, he found a note lying before him addressed to himself, in Miss's handwriting. It seemed to be written on a leaf torn from some old memorandum-book, and to prevent scurrilous trifling, had been sealed with six broken waters. Opening it almost tenderly, the master read as follows:

"RESPECTED SIR:—When you read this I am run away. Never to come back. Never, never never. You can give my beads to Mary Jennings, and my Amerika's Pride (a highly-colored lithograph from a tobacco-box) to Sally Flanders. But don't you give anything to Clydie Morpher. Don't you dare to. Do you know what my opinion of her, it is this, she is perfectly disgusting. That is all and no more at present from yours respectfully, MELISSA SMITH."

The master mused for some time over this characteristic epistle. As he was mechanically refolding it his eye caught a sentence written on the back in pencil, in another handwriting, somewhat blurred and indistinct from the heavy, incisive strokes of Miss's pen on the other side. It seemed to be a memorandum belonging to the book from which the leaf was originally torn:

"July 17, 5 hours in drift-dipping west—look out 20 oz., canned up 40 oz. Mem.—Saw M. S."

"July 17," said the master, opening his desk and taking a file of the Red Mountain Banner. "July 17," he repeated, running over the pages till he came to a paragraph headed "Distressing Suicide." "July 17—why, that's the day Smith killed himself. That's funny!"

"I wonder where the memorandum came from?" said the master, as he rose at last and buttoned up his coat. "Who is M. S.? M. S. stands for manuscript and Melissa Smith. Why don't—" but checking an impulsive query as to why people don't make their private memoranda generally intelligible—the master put the letter in his pocket and went home.

At sunrise the next morning he was picking his way through the palm-like fern and thick underbrush of the pine forest, starting the bare form of its form, and awakening a querulous protest from a few dissipated crows, who had evidently been making a night of it, and so came to the wooded ridge where he had once found Miss. There he found the prostrate pine and tassellated branches, but the throne was vacant. As he drew nearer, what might have been some frightened animal started through the crackling limbs. It ran up the tossed arms of the fallen monarch, and sheltered itself in some friendly foliage. The master reasoning the old seat found the nest still warm; looking up in the intertwining branches, he met the black eyes of the errant Miss. They gazed at each other without speaking. She was first to break the silence.

"What do you want?" she asked curtly.

The master had decided on a course of action.

"I want some crab apples," he said, humbly.

"Shant have 'em! go away. Why don't you get 'em of Clytemnestra?" (it seemed to be a relief to Miss to express her contempt in addition

to that classical young woman's already long drawn title).

"O, you wicked thing!"

"I am hungry, Lissy. I have eaten nothing since dinner yesterday. I am famished!" and the young man in a state of remarkable exhaustion leaned against the tree.

Melissa's heart was touched. In the bitter days of her gipsy life she had known the sensation he so artfully simulated. Overcome by his near-broken tone but not entirely divested of suspicion, she said:

"Dig under the tree near the roots, and you'll find lots, but mind you don't tell," for Miss had her boards as well as the rats and squirrels.

But the master of course was unable to find them; the effects of hunger probably blinding his senses. Miss grew uneasy. At length she peered at him through the leaves in an elfish way and questioned:

"If I come down and give you some, you'll promise not to touch me?"

The master promised.

"Hope you'll die if you do?"

The master accepted instant dissolution as a forfeit. Miss slid down the tree. The duties of hospitality fulfilled, she seated herself at a little distance and eyed the master with extreme caution.

"Why didn't you eat your breakfast, you bad man?"

"Because I've run away."

"Where to?" said Miss, her eyes twinkling.

"Anywhere—anywhere, away from here!" responded that deceitful wretch with tragic wildness of demeanor.

"What made you, bad boy!"—said Miss, with a sudden respect of conventionalities, and a rare touch of tenderness in her tones. "You'd better go back where your vitals are."

"What are vitals to a wounded spirit," asked the young man dramatically. He had reached the side of Miss during this dialogue and had taken her unresisting hand. He was too wise to notice his victory, however, and drawing Melissa's note from his pocket opened it before her.

"Couldn't you find any paper in the school house without tearing a leaf out of my memorandum book, Melissa?" he asked.

"It ain't out of your memorandum book," responded Miss fiercely.

"Indeed," said the master, turning to the lines in pencil, "I thought it was my handwriting."

Miss, who had been looking over his shoulder, suddenly seized the paper and snatched it out of his hand.

"It's father's writing!" she said, after a pause, in a softer tone.

"Where did you get it, Miss?"

"Aristides gave it to me."

"Where did he get it?"

"Don't know. He had the book in his pocket when I told him I was going to write to you, and he tore the leaf out. There, now—don't bother me any more."

Miss had turned her face away, and the black hair hid her downcast eyes.

Something in her gesture and expression reminded him of her father. Something, and more that was characteristic to her at such moments, made him fancy another resemblance, and caused him to ask impulsively, and less cautiously than was his wont.

"Do you remember your mother, Miss?"

"No."

"Did you never see her?"

"No—didn't I tell you not to bother, and you're agoin' an' doin' it!" said Miss, savagely.

The master was silent a moment.

"Did you ever think you would like to have a mother, Miss?" he asked again.

"No-o-o!"

The master rose. Miss looked up.

"Does Aristides come to school to-day?"

"I don't know."

"Are you going back? You'd better," she said.

"Well—Perhaps I may—Good-bye!"

He had proceeded a few steps, when, as he expected, she called him back. He turned. She was standing by the tree, with tears glistening in her eyes. The master felt the right moment had come. Going up to her, he took both her hands in his, and looking in her tearful eyes, said gravely:

"Miss, do you remember the first evening you came to see me?"

Miss remembered.

"You asked me if you might come to school, and I said—"

"Come!" responded the child, promptly.

"If I told you I was lonely without my little scholar, and that I wanted her to come, what would you say?"

The child hung her head in silence. The master waited patiently. Tempted by the quiet, a bare ran close to the couple, and raising her bright eyes and velvet forepaws, gazed at them fearlessly. A squirrel ran half way down the furrowed bark of the fallen tree, and there stopped.

"We are waiting, Lissy," said the master, in a whisper, and the child smiled. Stirred by a passing breeze, the tree-tops rocked, and a

slanting sunbeam stole through their interlaced boughs and fell on the doubting face and irresolute little figure. But a step in the dry branches and a rustling in the underbrush broke the spell.

A man dressed as a miner, carrying a long-handled shovel, came slowly through the woods. A red handkerchief tied around his head under his hat, with the loose ends hanging from beneath, did not add much favor to his unprepossessing face. He did not perceive the master and Miss until he was close upon them. When he did, he stopped suddenly and gazed at them with an expression of lowering distrust. Miss drew nearer to the master.

"Good mornin'—picknickin'—eh?" he asked, with an attempt at geniality, that was more repulsive than his natural manner.

"How are you—Prospectin', eh?" said the master, quietly, after the established colloquial formula of Red Mountain.

"Yes—a little in that way."

The stranger still hesitated, apparently waiting for them to go first, a matter which Miss decided by suddenly taking the master's hand in her quick way. What she said was scarcely audible, but the master, parting her hair over her forehead, kissed her, and so, hand in hand, they passed out of the damp aisles and forest odors into the open sunlight road. But Miss, looking back, saw that her old seat was occupied by the hopeful prospector, and fancied that in the shadows of her former throne something of a gratified leer overspread his face.

"He'll have to dig deep to find the crab apples," said the child to the master, as they came to the Red Mountain road.

When Aristides came to school that day he was confronted by Miss. But neither threats nor entreaties could extract from the reticent youth the whereabouts of the memorandum book nor where he got it. Two or three days afterward, during recess, he approached Miss, and beckoned her one side.

"Well," said Miss, impatiently.

"Did you ever read the story of 'Ali Baba?'"

"Yes."

"Do you believe it?"

"No."

"Well," said that sage infant, wheeling around on his stout legs, "It's true!"

#### CHAPTER IV.

WHICH HAS A GOOD MORAL TENDENCY.

somewhat less spiteful in her intercourse with the other scholars, Miss still retained an offensive attitude toward Clytemnestra. Perhaps the jealous element was not entirely stilled in her passionate little breast. Perhaps it was that Clytemnestra's round curves and plump outlines afforded an extensive pinching surface. But while these ebullitions were under the master's control, her enmity occasionally took a new and irrepressible form.

In his first estimate of the child's character he could not conceive that she had ever possessed a doll. But the master, like many other professed readers of character, was safer in a posteriori than a priori reasoning, for Miss had a doll. But then it was a peculiar doll—a frightful perversion of wax and sawdust—a doll fearfully and wonderfully made—a small edition of Miss. Its unhappy existence had been a secret discovered by Mrs. Morpher. It had been the old-time companion of Miss's wanderings, and bore evident marks of suffering. Its original complexion was long since washed away by the weather, and annotated by the slime of ditches. It looked very much as Miss had ten days past. Its one gown of faded stuff was dirty and ragged as hers had been. Miss had never been known to apply to it any childish term of endearment. She never exhibited it in the presence of other children. It was put severely to bed in a hollow tree near the school-house, and only allowed exercise during Miss's rambles. Fulfilling a stern duty to her doll—as she would to herself—it knew no luxuries.

Now Mrs. M., obeying a commendable impulse, bought another doll and gave it to Miss. The child received it gravely and curiously. The master on looking at it one day fancied he saw a slight resemblance in its round red cheeks and mild blue eyes to Clytemnestra. It became evident before long that Miss had also noticed the same resemblance. Accordingly, she hammered the waxen head on the rocks when she was alone, and sometimes dragged it with a string round its neck to and from school. At other times, setting it up on her desk, she made a pin cushion of its patient and inoffensive body. Whether this was done in revenge of what she considered a second figurative obstruction of Clytie's excellences upon her; or whether she had an intuitive appreciation of the rites of certain other heathens, and indulging in that "Fetish" ceremony imagined that the original of her wax model would pine away and finally die, is a metaphysical question I shall not now consider.

In spite of these moral vagaries, the master could not help noticing in her different tasks

the working of a quiet, restless and vigorous perception. She knew neither the hesitancy nor the doubts of childhood. Her answers in class were always slightly dashed with audacity. Of course she was not infallible. But her courage and daring in venturing beyond her own depth and that of the floundering little swimmers around her, in their minds, outweighed all error of judgment. Children are no better than grown people in this respect, I fancy; and whenever the little red hand flashed above her desk, there was a wandering silence, and even the master was something oppressed with a doubt of his own experience and judgment.

Nevertheless, certain attributes which at first amused and entertained his fancy, began to afflict him with grave doubts. He could not but see that Miss was revengeful, irreverent and willful. That there was but one better quality which pertained to her semi-savage disposition—the faculty of physical fortitude and self-sacrifice, and another—though not always an attribute of the noble savage—Truth. Miss was both fearless and sincere—perhaps in such a character the adjectives were synonymous.

The resident physician of Smith's Pocket was a Dr. Duchesne, or as he was better known to that locality, "Dr. Doochesny." Of a naturally refined nature and liberal education, he had steadily resisted the aggressions and temptations of Smith's Pocket, and represented to the master a kind of connecting link between his present life and the past. So that an intimacy sprang up between the two men, involving prolonged interviews in the doctor's little back shop, often to the exclusion of other suffering humanity and their physical ailments. It was in one of these interviews that the master mentioned the coincidence of the date of the memorandum on the back of Miss's letter and the day of Smith's suicide.

"If it were Smith's own handwriting, as the child says it is," said the master, "it shows queer state of mind that could contemplate suicide and indite private memoranda within the same twenty-four hours."

Dr. Duchesne removed his cigar from his lips and looked attentively at his friend.

"The only hypothesis," continued the master, "is that Smith was either drunk or crazy, and the fatal act was in a measure unpremeditated."

"Every man who commits suicide," returned the doctor, gravely, "is in my opinion insane, or what is nearly the same thing, becomes, through suffering, an irresponsible agent. In my professional experience I have seen most of the forms of mental and physical agony, and know what sacrifices men will make to preserve

even an existence, that to me seemed little better than death, so long as their intellect remained unclouded. When you come to reflect on the state of mind that chooses death as a preferable alternative, you generally find an exaltation and enthusiasm that differ very little from the ordinary diagnosis of delirium. Smith was not drunk," added the doctor, in his usual careless tone. "I saw his body."

The master remained buried in reflection. Presently the doctor removed his cigar.

"Perhaps I might help you to explain the coincidence you speak of."

"How?"

"Very easily. But this is a professional secret—you understand?"

"Yes—I understand," said the master, hastily, with an ill-defined uneasiness creeping over him.

"Do you know anything of the phenomena of death by gunshot wounds?"

"No."

"Then you must take certain facts as granted. Smith, you remember, was killed instantly. The nature of his wound and the manner of his death were such as would have caused an instantaneous and complete relaxation of all the muscles. Rigidity and contraction would have supervened, of course, but only after life was extinct, and consciousness had fled. Now Smith was found with his hands tightly grasping a pistol."

"Well?"

"Well, my dear boy, he must have grasped it after he was dead, or have prevailed upon some friend to stiffen his fingers around it."

"Do you mean that he was murdered?"

Dr. Duchesne rose and closed the door. "We have different names for these things in Smith's Pocket. I mean to say that he didn't kill himself—that's all."

"But, doctor," said the master, earnestly, "do you think you have done right in concealing this fact? Do you think it just—do you think it consistent with your duty to his orphan child?"

"That's why I have said nothing about it," replied the doctor, coolly—"because of my consideration for his orphan child."

The master breathed quickly, and stared at the doctor.

"Doctor!—you don't think that Miss—"

"Hush!—don't get excited, my young friend. Remember I am not a lawyer—only a doctor."

"But Miss was with me the very night he must have been killed. We were walking together when we heard the report—that is—a report—which must have been the one," stammered the master.

"When was that?"

"At half-past eleven. I remember looking at my watch."

"Humph!—when did you meet her first?"

"At half-past eight. Come, doctor, you have made a mistake here, at least," said the young man, with an assumption of ease he was far from feeling. "Give Miss the benefit of the doubt."

Dr. Duchesne replied by opening a drawer of his desk. After rummaging among the powders and mysterious looking instruments with which it was stored, he finally brought forth a longitudinal slip of folded white paper. It was appropriately labeled "Poison."

"Look here," said the doctor, opening the paper. It contained two or three black coarse hairs. "Do you know them?"

"No."

"Look again!"

"It looks something like Miss's hair," said the master, with a fathomless sinking of the heart.

"When I was called to look at the body," continued the doctor, with the deliberate cautiousness of a professional diagnosis, "my suspicions were aroused by the circumstance I told you of. I managed to get possession of the pistol, and found these hairs twisted around the lock as though they had been accidentally caught and violently disengaged. I don't think that any one else saw them. I removed them without observation and—they are at your service."

The master sank back in his seat and pressed his hand to his forehead. The image of Miss rose before him with flashing eye and long black hair, and seemed to seat down and resist defiantly the suspicion that crept slowly over his heart.

"I forbore to tell you this, my friend," continued the doctor, slowly and gravely, "because when I learned that you had taken this strange child under your protection I did not wish to tell you that which—though I contend it does not alter her claims to man's sympathy and kindness—still might have prejudiced her in your eyes. Her improvement under your care has proven my position correct. I have, as you know, peculiar ideas of the extent to which much humanity is responsible. I find in my heart—looking back over the child's career—no sentiment but pity. I am mistaken in you if I thought this circumstance aroused any other feeling in yours."

Still the figure of Miss stood before the master as he bent before the doctor's words, in the same defiant attitude, with something of scorn in the great dark eyes, that made the blood tingle in his cheeks, and seemed to make the reasoning of the speaker but meaningless and empty words. At length he rose. As he stood

with his hand on the latch he turned to Dr. Duchesne, who was watching him with careful solicitude.

"I don't know but that you have done well to keep this from me. At all events it has not—cannot, and should not alter my opinion toward Miss. You will of course keep it a secret. In the meantime you must not blame me if I cling to my instincts in preference to your judgment. I still believe that you are mistaken in regard to her."

"Stay one moment," said the doctor, "promise me you will not say anything of this, nor attempt to prosecute the matter further till you have consulted with me."

"I promise. Good night."

"Good night"—and so they parted.

True to that promise and his own instinctive promptings the master endeavored to atone for his momentary disloyalty by greater solicitude for Miss. But the child had noticed some change in the master's thoughtful manner, and in one of their long post-prandial walks, she stopped suddenly and mounting a stump, looked full in his face with big searching eyes. "You ain't mad?" said she, with an interrogative shake of the black braids. "No." "Nor bothered?" "No." "Nor hungry?" (Hunger was to Miss a sickness that might attack a person at any moment.) "No." "Nor thinking of her?" "Of whom, Lissy?" "That white girl." (This was the latest epithet invented by Miss, who was a very dark brunette, to express Clytemnestra.) "No." "Upon your word?" (A substitute for "Hope you'll die!" proposed by the master.) "Yes." "And sacred honor?" "Yes." Then Miss gave him a fierce little kiss, and hopping down, fluttered off. For two or three days after that she condescended to appear more like other children and be, as she expressed it, "good."

When the summer was about spent, and the last harvest had been gathered in the valleys, the master bethought him of gathering in a few ripened shoots of the young idea, and having his Harvest Home or Examination. So the savans and professionals of Smith's Pocket were gathered to witness that time-honored custom of placing timid children in a constrained position, and bullying them as in a witness-box. As usual in such cases, the most audacious and self-possessed were the lucky recipients of the honors. The reader will imagine that in the present instance, Miss and Clytie were pre-eminent and divided public attention; Miss with her clearness of material perception and self-reliance. Clytie with her placid self-esteem, and saint-like correctness of deportment. The other little ones were timid and blundering. Miss's readiness and brilliancy,

of course, captivated the greatest number, and provoked the greatest applause, and Miss's antecedents had unconsciously awakened the strongest sympathies of the miners, whose athletic forms were ranged against the walls, or whose handsome bearded faces looked in at the window. But Miss's popularity was overthrown by an unexpected circumstance.

McSnagley had invited himself, and had been going through the pleasing entertainment of frightening the more timid pupils by the vaguest and most ambiguous questions, delivered in an impressive funeral tone; and Miss had soared into astronomy, and was tracking the course of our "spotted ball" through space, and defining the "tethered orbits" of the planets—when McSnagley deliberately arose.

"Meelissy, ye were speaking of the revolutions of this yer yearth, and its movements with regard to the sun, and I taink you said it had been a doin' of it since the creashun, eh?"

Miss nodded a scornful affirmative.

"Well, war that the truth?" said McSnagley, folding his arms.

"Yes," said Miss shutting up her little red lips tightly.

The handsome outlines at the windows peered further into the school-room, and a saintly Raphael-like face, with blonde beard and soft blue eyes, belonging to the biggest scamp in the diggings, turned toward the child and whispered—

"Stick to it Miss! It's only a big bluff of the parson."

The reverend gentleman heaved a deep sigh, and cast a compassionate glance at the master, then at the children, and then rested his eye on Clytie. That young woman softly elevated her round, white arm. Its seductive curves were enhanced by a gorgeous and massive specimen bracelet, the gift of one of her humblest worshipers worn in honor of the occasion. There was a momentary pause. Clytie's round cheeks were very pink and soft. Clytie's big eyes were very bright and blue. Clytie's low-necked, white, book-murkin rested softly on Clytie's white, plumed shoulders. Clytie looked at the master, and the master nodded. Then Clytie spoke softly:

"Joshua commanded the sun to stand still and it obeyed him."

There was a low hum of applause in the school-room, a triumphant express on McSnagley's face, a grave shadow on the master's, and a comical look of disappointment reflected from the windows. Miss skimmed rapidly over her astronomy, and then shut the book with a loud snap. A groan burst from McSnagley, an expression of astonishment from the school-room, and a yell from the windows as Miss brought her red fist down on the desk, with the emphatic declaration:

"It's a d—n lie. I don't believe it!"

## CHAPTER V.

## "OPEN SESAME."

The long wet season had drawn near its close. Signs of spring were visible in the swelling buds and rushing torrents. The pine forests exhaled a fresher spicery. The azalias were already budding; the Ceanothus getting ready its lilac livery for spring. On the green upland which climbed Red Mountain at its southern aspect the long spike of the monkshood shot up from its broad-leaved stool and once more shook its dark blue bells. Again the billow above Smith's grave was soft and green, its crest just teased with the foam of daisies and buttercups. The little graveyard had gathered a few new dwellers in the past year, and the mounds were placed two by two by the little paling until they reached Smith's grave, and there, there was but one. General superstition had shunned the enforced companionship. The plot beside Smith was vacant.

It was the custom of the driver of the great Wingdam stage to whip up his horses at the foot of the hill, and so enter Smith's Pocket at that remarkable place which the woodcuts in the hotel bar-room represented to credulous humanity as the usual rate of speed of that conveyance. At least, Aristides Morpher thought so as he stood one Sunday afternoon, uneasily conscious of his best jacket and collar, waiting its approach. Nor could anything shake his belief that regularly on that occasion the horses ran away with the driver, and that that individual from motives of deep policy pretended not to notice it until they were stopped.

"Anybody up from below, Bill?" said the landlord as the driver slowly descended from his perch.

"Nobody for you," responded Bill, shortly. "Dusenberry kem up as usual, and got off at the old place. You can't make a livin' off him I reckon."

"Have you found out what his name is yet?" continued the landlord, implying that "Dusenberry" was simply a playful epithet of the driver.

"He says his name is Waters," returned Bill. "Jake said he saw him at the North Fork in '50—called himself Moore then. Guess he ain't no good, nohow. What's he doin' round here?"

"Says he's prospectin'," replied the landlord. "He has a claim somewhar in the woods. Gambles a little too, I reckon. He don't travel on his beauty anyhow."

"If you had seen him makin' up to a piece of calico inside, last trip, and she a makin' up to him quite confidential like, I guess you'd think he was a lady-killer. My eye, but wasn't she a

stunner! Clytie Morpher wasn't nowhere to begin with her."

"Who was she Bill?" asked half a dozen masculine voices.

"Don't know. We picked her up this side of 'Coyote.' Fancy—I tell you—pretty little hat and pink ribbings—eyes that 'ud bore you through at a hundred yards—white teeth—brown gaiters and such a ankle! She didn't want to show it, O. no!" added the sarcastic Bill, with deep significance.

"Where did you leave her, Bill?" asked a gentle village swain, who had been fired by the glowing picture of the fair unknown.

"That's what's the matter. You see after we picked her up, she said she was goin' through to Wingdam. Of course there wasn't anything in the stage or on the road too good to offer her. Old Major Spaffler wanted to treat her to lemonade at every station. Judge Plunkett kep' a pullin' down the blinds and a hakin' of them up to keep out the sun and let in the air. Best if old McNagley didn't want to carry her travelin' bag. There wasn't any attention, boys, she didn't get—but it wasn't no use—bless you! She never so much as passed the time of day with them."

"But where did she go?" inquired another anxious auditor.

"Keep your foot off the drag, and I'll tell you. After we left the Ring Tail Canyon, Dusenberry, as usual, got on. Presently one of the outsiders turns round to me, and says he, 'D—d if Ugly Mugain't got the inside track of all of you this time!' I looked down, and dern my skin if there wasn't Dusenberry a sittin' up along side of the lady, quite comfortable, as if they had been children together. At the next station Dusenberry gets off. So does the lady. 'Aren't you goin' on to Wingdam, marm?' says I. 'No,' says she. 'Mayn't we have the pleasure of your company further?' says the judge, takin' off his hat. 'No, I've changed my mind,' says she, and off she walked arm in arm with him as cool as you please."

"Wonder if that warn't the party that passed through here last July?" asked the blacksmith, joining the loungers in front of the stage office. "Waters brought up a buggy to get the axle bolted. There was a woman setting in the buggy, but the hood was down and I didn't get to see her face."

During this conversation, Aristides, after a long, lingering look at the stage, had at last torn himself away from its fascinations, and was now lounging down the long, straggling street in a peculiarly dissipated manner, with his hat pushed on the back part of his head, his right hand and a greater portion of his right arm

buried in his trousers' pocket. This might have been partly owing to the shortness of his legs and the comparative amputee of his trousers, which to the casual observer seemed to obviate the necessity of any other garment. But when he reached the bottom of the street, and further enlivened his progress by whistling shrilly between his fingers, and finally drew a fragment of cigar from his pocket and placed it between his teeth, it was evident that there was a moral as well as physical laxity in his conduct. The near fact was that Aristides had that afternoon evaded the Sabbath School, and was open to any kind of infant iniquity.

The main street of Smith's Pocket gradually lost its civilized character, and after one or two futile attempts at improvement at its lower extremity, terminated impotently in a chaos of ditches, races, and tailings. Out of this again a narrow trail started along the mountain side, and communicated with that vast amphitheatre which still exhibited the pioneer efforts of the early settlers. It was this trail that Aristides took that Sunday afternoon, and which he followed until he reached the hillside a few rods below the yawning fissure of Smith's Pocket. After a careful examination of the vicinity he cleared away the underbrush beside a fallen pine that lay near, and sat down in the attitude of patient and deliberate expectancy.

Five minutes passed. Ten, twenty, and finally a half hour was gone. Aristides threw away his cigar, which he had lacked determination to light, and peeled small slips from the inner bark of the pine tree and munched them gravely. Another five, ten, and twenty minutes passed, and the sun began to drop below the opposite hillside. Another ten minutes, and the whole of the amphitheatre above was in heavy shadow. Ten minutes more and the distant windows in the settlement flamed redly. Five minutes and the spire of the Methodist church caught the glow—and then the underbrush crackled.

Aristides, looking up, saw the trunk of the prostrate pine slowly lifting itself before him.

A second glance showed the fearless and self-possessed boy that the apparent phenomenon was simple and easily explained. The tree had fallen midway and at right angles across the trunk of another prostrate monarch. So accurately and evenly was it balanced that the child was satisfied, from a liberal experience of the application of these principles to the game of "see-saw," that a very slight impulse to either end was sufficient to destroy the equilibrium. That impulse proceeded from his end of the tree, as he saw when the uplifted trunk disclosed an

opening in the ground beneath it, and the head and shoulders of a man emerging therefrom.

Aristides threw himself noiselessly on his stomach. The thick clump of an azalia hid him from view, though it did not obstruct his survey of the stranger, whom he at once recognized as his former enemy—the man with the red handkerchief—the hopeful prospector of Red Mountain, and the hypothetical "Dusenberry" of the stage-driver.

The stranger looked cautiously round, and Aristides shrank close behind the friendly azalia.

Satisfied that he was unobserved, the enterprising proprietor returned to the opening and descended, reappearing with a worn, black enameled traveling-bag, which he carried with difficulty. This he again enveloped in a blanket and strapped tightly on his back, and a long handled shovel, brought up from the same mysterious storehouse, completed his outfit. As he stood for a moment leaning on the shovel, it was the figure of the hopeful prospector that had appeared to Miss and her protector in the heart of the forest. A very slight effort was sufficient to replace the fallen tree in its former position. Raising the shovel to his shoulder, he moved away, brushing against the azalia bush which hid the breathless Aristides. The sound of his footsteps retreating through the crackling brush presently died out, and a drowsy Sabbath stillness succeeded.

Aristides rose. There was a wonderful brightness in his gray eyes, and a flush on his sun-burned cheek. Seizing a root of the fallen pine, he essayed to move it. But it defied his endeavors. Aristides looked round.

"There's some trick about it, but I'll find it yet," said that astute child.

Breaking off the limb of a buckeye, he extemporized a lever. The first attempt failed. The second succeeded, and the long roots of the tree again ascended. But as it required prolonged effort to keep the tree up, before the impetus was lost Aristides seized the opportunity to jump into the opening. At the same moment the tree slowly returned to its former position.

In the sudden change from the waning light to complete darkness, Aristides was for a moment confounded. Recovering himself he drew a match from his capacious pocket, and striking it against the sole of his boot, by the upspringing flash perceived a candle stuck in the crevices of the rock beside him. Lighting it, he glanced curiously around him. He was at the entrance of a long gallery at the further extremity of which he could faintly see the glimmering of the outer daylight. Following the gallery cautiously he presently came to an antechamber, and by the glimmering of the light



above him at once saw that it was the same he had seen in his wonderful dream.

The ante-chamber was about fourteen feet square, with walls of decomposed quartz, mingled with flaky mica that reflected here and there the gleam of Aristides's candle with a singular brilliancy. It did not need much observation on his part to determine the reason of the stranger's lonely labors. On a rough rocker beside him were two fragments of ore taken from the adjacent wall, the smallest of which the two arms of Aristides could hardly clasp. To his dazzled eyes they seemed to be almost entirely of pure gold. The great strike of '56 at Ring Tail Canyon had brought to the wonderful vision of Smith's Pocket no such monstrous nuggets as were here.

Aristides turned to the wall again which had been apparently the last scene of the stranger's labor, and from which the two masses of ore were taken. Even to his inexperienced eye it represented a wealth almost incalculable. Through the loose red soil everywhere glittering star points of the precious metal threw back the rays of his candle. Aristides turned pale and trembled.

Here was the realization of his most extravagant fancy. Ever since his strange dream and encounter with the stranger, he had felt an irresistible desire to follow up his adventure, and discover the secrets of the second cavern. But when he had returned to Smith's Pocket, a few days after, the wreck of the fallen roof had blocked up that part of the opening from which he had caught sight of the hidden workman below. During this visit he had picked up from among the rubbish the memorandum-book which had supplied Miss with letter paper. Still haunting that locality after school hours, he had noticed that regularly at sunset the man with a red handkerchief appeared in some mysterious way from the hillside below Smith's Pocket, and went away in the direction of the settlement. By careful watching, Aristides had fixed the location of his mysterious appearance to a point a few rods below the opening of Smith's Pocket. Flushed by this discovery, he had been betrayed from his usual discretion, so far as to intimate a hinting of the suspicion that possessed him, in the few mysterious words he had whispered to Miss at school. The accident we have described above determined the complete discovery of the secret.

Up to that moment, curiosity, love of adventure, and a revengeful instinct toward the stranger were the only motives that impelled Aristides in his actions. Now a more serious feeling began to grow upon him with the awful responsibility of his secret.

Who was the stranger, and why did he keep the fact of this immense wealth hidden from the world? Suppose he, Aristides, were to tell? Wouldn't the school-boys look up at him with interest as the hero and discoverer of this wonderful cavern, and wouldn't the stage-driver feel proud of his acquaintance and offer him rides for nothing? Why hadn't Smith discovered it—who was poor and wanted money, whom Aristides had liked, who was the father of Miss for whom Aristides confessed a secret passion, who belonged to the settlement and helped build it up—instead of the stranger. Had Smith never a suspicion that gold was so near him, and if so, why hadn't he killed himself? But did Smith kill himself? And at this thought and its correlative fancy, again the cheek of Aristides blanched and the candle shook in his nervous fingers.

Apart and distant from these passing conjectures one idea remained firm and dominant in his mind. The man with the red handkerchief had no right to this treasure! The mysterious instinct which directed this judicial ruling of Aristides had settled this fact as indubitably as though proven by the weight of the strongest testimony. For an instant a wild thought sprang up in his heart, and he seized the nearest mass of ore with the half-formed intention of bearing it directly to the feet of Miss as her just and due inheritance. But Aristides could not lift it, and the idea passed out of his mind with the frustrated action.

At the further end of the gallery a few blankets were lying, and, with some mining implements, a kettle of water, a few worn flannel shirts, were the only articles which this subterranean habitation possessed. In turning over one of the blankets, Aristides picked up a woman's comb. It was a tortoise shell, and bright with some fanciful ornamentation. Without a moment's hesitation Aristides pocketed it as the natural property of Miss. A pocket book containing a few old letters, in the breast pocket of one of the blue shirts, was transferred to that of Aristides with the same coolness and sentiment of instinctive justice.

Aristides wisely reflected that these unimportant articles would excite no suspicion if found in his possession. A fragment of the rock which, if he had taken as he felt impelled, would have precipitated the discovery that Aristides had decided to put off until he had perfected a certain plan.

The light from the opening above had gradually faded, and Aristides knew that night had fallen. To prevent suspicion he must return home. He re-entered the gallery and reached the opening of the egress. One of the roofs of the tree projected into the opening.

He seized it and endeavored to lift it, but in vain. Panting with exertions, he again and again exerted the fullest power of his active sinews, but the tree remained immovable—the opening remained sealed as firmly as with Solomon's signet. Raising his candle toward it, Aristides saw the reason of its resistance. In his hurried ingress he had allowed the tree to revolve sufficiently to permit one of its roots to project into the opening, which held it firmly down. In the shock of the discovery the excitement which had sustained him gave way, and with a hopeless cry the just Aristides fell senseless on the floor of the gallery.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE TRIALS OF MRS. MORPHER.

"Now, where on earth can that child be?" said Mr. Morpher, shading her eyes with her hand, as she stood at the door of the "Mountain Ranch" looking down the Windham Road at sunset. "With his best things on, t. o. Goodness!—what were boys made for?"

Mr. Morpher, without replying to this question, apparently addressed to himself as an adult representative of the wayward species, appeared at the door and endeavored to pour oil on the troubled waters.

"Oh, he's all right, Sue! Don't fuss about him," said Mr. Morpher with an imbecile sense of conveying comfort in the emphasized pronoun, "he's down the gulch, or in the tunnel, or over to the claim. He'll turn up by bed time. Don't you worry about him. I'll look him up in a minute"—and Mr. Morpher taking his hat, sauntered down the road in the direction of the National Hotel.

Mrs. M. gazed doubtfully after her liege. "Looking up" Aristides, in her domestic experience implied a prolonged absence in the bar-room of the hotel—the tedium whereof was beguiled by seven-up or euchre. But she only said: "Don't be long, James" and sighed hopelessly as she turned back in the house.

Once again within her own castle walls Mrs. Morpher dropped her look of patient suffering and glanced defiantly around for a fresh grievance.

The decorous little parlor offered nothing to provoke the hostility of her peculiar instincts. Spotless were the white curtains; the bright carpet guiltless of stain or dust. The chairs were placed arithmetically in twos, and added up evenly on the four sides with nothing to

carry over. Two bunches of lavender and fenel breathed an odor of sanctified cleanliness through the room. Five daguerreotypes on the mantel-piece, represented the Morpher family in progressive stages of petrification, and had the Medusa-like effect of freezing visitors into similar attitudes in their chairs. The walls were further enlivened with two colored engravings of scenes in the domestic history of George Washington, in which the Father of his Country seemed to look blandly from his own correct family circle into that of Morpher's and to breathe quite audible from his gilt frame a dignified blessing.

Lingering a moment in this sacred inclosure to readjust the table-cloth, Mrs. Morpher passed into the dining-room where the correct Clytie presided at the supper table at which the rest of the family were seated. Mrs. Morpher's quick eyes caught the spectacle of Miss with her chin resting on her hands, and her elbows on the table, sardonically surveying the model of deportment opposite to her.

"Miss!"

"Well!"

"Where's your elbows?"

"Here's one, and there's the other," said Miss, quietly, indicating their respective localities by smartly tapping them with the palm of her hand.

"Take them off the table, instantly, you bold, forward girl—and you, sir, quit that giggling and eat your supper, if you don't want to be put to bed without it!" added Mrs. Morpher to Lycurgus, to whom Miss's answer had afforded boundless satisfaction. "You're getting to be just as bad as her, and mercy knows you never were a seraphim?"

"What's a seraphim, mother, and what do they do?" asked Lycurgus, with growing interest.

"They don't ask questions when they should be eating their supper, and thankful for it," interposed Clytie, authoritatively, as one to whom the genteel attributes and social habits of the seraphim had been a privileged revelation.

"But, mother—"

"Hush—and don't be a heathen—run and see who that is coming in," said Mrs. Morpher, as the sound of footsteps were heard in the passage.

The door opened, and McSnagley entered.

"Why, bless my soul—how do you do?" said Mrs. Morpher, with genteel astonishment. "Quite a stranger, I declare."

This was a polite fiction. Miss knew the fact to be that Mrs. Morpher was reputed to "set the best table" in Smith's Pocket, and McSnagley always called in on Sunday evenings at sup-

per, to discuss the current gossip, and "nag" Miss with selected texts.

The verbal McNagley as usual couldn't stop a moment—and just dropped in "in passim." The actual McNagley deposited his hat in the corner, and placed himself, in the flesh, on a chair by the table.

"And how's brother James, and the family?"

"They're all well; except 'Risty.' He's off agin. As if my life weren't already pestered out with one child"—and Mrs. Morpher glanced significantly at Miss.

"Ab, well, we all have our trials," said McNagley. "I've been ailin' agin. That ager must be in my bones still. I've been unsettled myself to-day."

There was the appearance of truth in this statement; Mr. McNagley's voice had a hollow resonant sound, and his eyes were nervous and fidgety. He had an odd trick too of occasionally stopping in the middle of a sentence, and listening as though he heard some distant sound. These things, which Mrs. Morpher recalled afterwards, did not, in the undercurrent of uneasiness about Aristides which she felt the whole of that evening, so particularly attract her attention.

"I know something," said Lycurgus, during one of the pauses, from the retirement of his corner. "If you dare to—Kerg!"—said Miss.

"Miss says she knows where Risty is, but she won't tell," said the law-giver, not heeding the warning. The words were scarcely uttered before Miss's red hand flashed in the air and descended with a resounding box on the traitor's ear. Lycurgus howled, Mrs. Morpher darted into the corner, and Miss was dragged, defiant and struggling to the light.

"O, you wicked, wicked child—why don't you say if you know?" said Mrs. Morpher, shaking her as if the information were to be dislodged from some concealed part of her dress.

"I didn't say I knew for good"—at last responded Miss. "I said I thought I knew."

"Well, where do you think he is?"

But Miss was firm. Even the gloomy picture of the future state devised by McNagley could not alter her determination. Mrs. Morpher, who had a wholesome awe for this strange child, at last had recourse to entreaty. Finally, Miss offered a compromise.

"I'll tell the master, but I won't tell you nor him—partiklerly him"—said Miss indicating the parson with a bodkin-dart of her forefinger.

Mrs. Morpher hesitated. Her maternal anxiety at length overcame her sense of dignity and discipline.

"Who knows where the master is, or where he can be found to night?" she asked hastily.

"He's over to Dr. Duchesne's," said Clytie eagerly—"that is"—she stammered, a rich color suddenly flushing from her temples to her round shoulders—"he's usually there in the evenings, I mean."

"Run over, there's a dear, and ask him to come here," said Mrs. Morpher, without noticing the sudden irregularity of conduct in her first born. "Run quick!"

Clytie did not wait for a second command. Without availing herself of the proffered company of Mr. McNagley, she hastily tied the strings of her school hat under her plump chin, and slipped out of the house. It was not far to the doctor's office, and Clytie walked quickly, overlooking in her haste and preoccupation the admiring glances which several of the swain of Smith's Pocket cast after her as she passed. But on arriving at the doctor's door, so out of breath and excitement was this usual model of deportment that on finding herself in the presence of the master and his friend, she only stood in embarrassed silence, and made up for her lack of verbal expression by a succession of eloquent blushes.

Let us look at her for a moment as she stands there. Her little straw hat, trimmed with cherry-colored ribbons, rests on the waves of her blonde hair. There are other gay ribbons on her light summer dress, clasping her round waist, girdling her wrist, and fastening her collar about her white throat. Her large blue eyes are very dark and moist—it may be with excitement or a thought of the lost Aristides, or the tobacco smoke, with which, I regret to say, the room is highly charged. But certainly as she stands leaning against the doorway, biting her moist, scarlet lip, and trying to pull down the broad brim of her hat over the surging waves of color that will beat rhythmically up to her cheeks and temples, she is so dangerously pretty that I am glad for the master's sake he is the philosopher he has just described himself to his friend the doctor, and that he prefers to study human physiology from the inner surface.

When Clytie has recovered herself sufficiently to state her message, the master offered to accompany her back. As Clytie took his arm with some slight trepidation, Doctor Duchesne, who had taken sharp note of these "febrile" symptoms, uttered a prolonged whistle, and returned thoughtfully to his office.

Although Clytie found the distance returning no further than the distance going, with the exhaustion of her first journey, it was natural that

her homeward steps should be slower, and that the master should regulate his pace to accommodate her. It was natural, too, that her voice should be quite low and indistinct, so that the master was obliged to bring his hat nearer the cherry-colored ribbons in the course of conversation. It was also natural that he should offer the sensitive girl such comfort as lay in tenderly modulated tones and playful epithets. And if in the irregularities of the main street it was necessary to take Clytie's hand or to put his arm around her waist in helping her up declivities, that the master saw no impropriety in the act was evident from the fact that he did not remove his arm when the difficulty was surmounted. In this way Clytie's return occupied some moments more than her going, and Mrs. Morpher was waiting anxiously at the door when the young people arrived.

As the master entered the room, Miss called him to her. "Bend down your head," she said "and I'll whisper. But mind, now I don't say I know for truth where Risty is. I only reckon."

The master bent down his head. As usual in such cases, everybody else felt constrained to listen, and McNagley's curiosity was awakened to its fullest extent.

When the master had received the required information, he said quietly:

"I think I'll go myself to this place Miss wishes to make a secret of, and see if the boy is there. It will save trouble to any one else if she should be mistaken."

"Haden't you better take some one with you?" said Mrs. Morpher.

"By all means—I'll go," said Mr. McNagley, with feverish acidity.

The master looked inquiringly at Miss.

"He can go if he wants to, but he'd better not," said Miss, looking directly into McNagley's eyes.

"What do you mean by that, you little savage?" said McNagley, quickly.

Miss turned scornfully away. "Go," she said, "go if you want to" and resumed her seat in the corner.

The master hesitated. But he could not withstand the appeal in the eyes of the mother and daughter, and after a short inward struggle, he turned to McNagley and bade him briefly "Come."

When they had left the house and stood in the road together, McNagley stopped.

"Where are you goin'?"

"To Smith's Pocket."

McNagley still lingered.

"Do you ever carry any weppings?" he at length asked.

"Weapons! No. What do you want with weapons to go a mile on a starlit road to a deserted claim? Nonsense, man, what are you thinking of? We're hunting a lost child, not a runaway felon. Come along," and the master dragged him away.

Mrs. Morpher watched them from the door, until their figures were lost in the darkness. When she returned to the dining-room, Clytie had already retired to her own room, and Mrs. Morpher overruling Miss's desire to sit up until the master had returned, bade her follow that correct example. "There's Clytie, no, gone to bed like a young lady, and do you do like her," and Mrs. Morpher, with this one drop of balm in the midst of her trials, trimmed the light and sat down in patience to wait for Aristides, and console herself with the reflection of Clytie's excellency. "Poor Clytie!" mused that motherly woman, "how excited and worried she looks about her brother. I hope she'll be able to get to sleep."

It did not occur to Mrs. Morpher that there were seasons in the life of young girls when younger brothers ceased to become objects of extreme solicitude. It did not occur to her to go up-stairs and see how her wish was likely to be gratified. It was well in her anxiety that she did not, and that the crowning trial of the day's troubles was spared her then. For at that moment Clytie was lying on the bed where she had flung herself without undressing, the heavy masses of her blonde hair tumbled about her neck, and her hot face buried in her hands.

Of what was the correct Clytie thinking?

She was thinking—lying there with her burning cheeks pressed against the pillow—that she loved the master! She was recalling, step by step, every incident that had occurred in their lonely walk. She was repeating to herself his facile sentences, wringing and twisting them to extract one drop to assuage the strange thirst that was growing up in her soul. She was thinking—silly Clytie—that he had never appeared so kind before, and she was thinking—sillier Clytie—that no one had ever before felt as she did then.

"How soft and white his hands were. How sweet and gentle were the tones of his voice. How easily he spoke—so unlike her father, McNagley, or the young men whom she met at church or on pinnies. How tall and handsome he looked as he pressed her hand at the door. Did he press her hand—or was it a mistake?" Yes, he must have pressed her hand, for she remembers now to have pressed his in return. And he put his arm around her waist once, and she feels it yet, and the strange perfume as he



drew her closer to him. (Mem. The master had been smoking. Poor Clytie!)

When she had reached this point she raised herself and sat up, and began the process of undressing, mechanically putting each article away in the precise methodical habit of her former life. But she found herself sitting again on the bed twisting her hair, which fell over her plump, white shoulders, idly between her fingers, and patting the carpet with her small white foot. She had been sitting thus some minutes, when she heard the sound of voices without, the tramping of many feet, and a loud rapping at the door below. She sprang to the door and looked out into the passage. Something white passed by her like a flash and crouched down at the head of the stairs. It was Miss. Mrs. Morpher had opened the door.

"Is Mr. Morpher in?" said a half dozen strange, hoarse voices.

"No!"

"Where is he?"

"He's at some of the saloons. O, tell me, has anything happened? Is it about Aristides? Where is he—is he safe?" said Mrs. Morpher, wringing her hands in agony.

"He's all right," said one of the men, with Mr. Morpher's old emphasis, "but—"

"But what?"

Miss moved slowly down the staircase, and Clytie, from the passage above, held her breath.

"There's been a row down to Smith's old Pocket—a fight—a man killed."

"Who?" shouted Miss from the stairs.

"McSnagley—shot dead!"

## CHATER VII.

BEFORE CHIEF JUSTICE LYNCH.

The hurried statement of the messenger was corroborated in the streets that night. It was certain that McSnagley was killed. Smith's Pocket, excited but sceptical, had seen the body, had put its fingers in the bullet hole and was satisfied. Smith's Pocket, albeit hoarse with shouting and excitement, still discussed details with infinite relish in the bar-rooms and saloons, and in the main street in clamorous knots that in front of the jail where the prisoner was confined seemed to swell into a mob. Smith's Pocket, bearded, blue-shirted and belligerent, crowding about this locality from time to time uttered appeals to justice that swelled on the night wind, not unfrequently coupling these invocations with the name of that eminent jurist—Lynch.

Let not the simple reader suppose that the mere taking off of a fellow mortal had created this uproar. The tenure of life in Smith's Pocket was vain and uncertain at the best, and as such philosophically accepted, and the blowing out of a brief candle here and there seldom left a permanent shadow with the survivors. In such instances too, the victims had received their quietus from the hands of brother-townsmen, socially as it were, in broad day, in the open streets, and under other mitigating circumstances. Thus, when Judge Starbottle, of Virginia, and "French Pete" exchanged snots with each across the plaza until their revolvers were exhausted and the luckless Pete received a bullet through the lungs, half the town witnessed it, and were struck with the gallant and chivalrous bearing of these gentlemen, and to this day point with feelings of pride and admiration to the bullet holes in the door of the "National Hotel," as they explain how narrow was the escape of the women in the parlor. But here was a man murdered at night in a lonely place and by a stranger—a man unknown to the saloons of Smith's Pocket, a wretch who could not plead the excitement of monte or the delirium of whisky as an excuse. No wonder that Smith's Pocket surged with virtuous indignation beneath the windows of the prison and clamored for his blood.

And as the crowd thickened and swayed to and fro, the story of his crime grew exaggerated by hurried and frequent repetition. Half a dozen speakers volunteered to give the details with an added horror to every sentence. How one of Morpher's children had been missing for a week or more. How the schoolmaster and the parson were taking a walk that evening, and, coming to Smith's Pocket, heard a faint voice from its depths which they recognized as belonging to the missing child. How they had succeeded in dragging him out and gathered from his infant lips the story of his incarceration by the murderer Waters and his enforced labors in the mine. How they were interrupted by the appearance of Waters—followed by an highly colored and epithet-illustrated account of the interview and quarrel. How Waters struck the schoolmaster, who returned the blow with a pier. How Waters thereupon drew a Derringer and fired, missing the schoolmaster, but killing McSnagley behind him. How it was believed that Waters was one of Joaquin's gang—that he had killed Smith, etc., etc. At each pause the crowd pushed and panted, stealthily creeping around the doors and windows of the jail like some strange beast of prey, until the climax was reached, and a hush fell, and two men were silently dispatched for a rope, and a critical ex-

amination was made of the limbs of a pine tree in the vicinity.

The man to whom these incidents had the most terrible significance might have seemed the least concerned as he sat that night, but a few feet removed from the eager crowd without, his hands clasped tightly together between his knees, and the expression on his face of one whose thoughts were far away. A candle stuck in a tin sconce on the wall, flickered as the night wind blew freshly through a broken pane of the window. Its uncertain light revealed a low room whose cloth ceiling was stained and ragged, and from whose boarded walls the torn paper hung in strips; a lumber room partitioned from the front office, which was occupied by a justice of the peace. If this temporary dungeon had an appearance of insecurity, there was some compensation in the spectacle of an armed sentinel who sat upon a straw mattress in the doorway, and another who patrolled the narrow hall which led to the street. That the prisoner was not placed in one of the cells in the floor below may have been owing to the fact that the law recognized his detention as only temporary, and while providing the two guards as a preventive against the egress of Crime from within, discreetly removed all unnecessary and provoking obstacles to the ingress of Justice from without.

Since the prisoner's arrest he had refused to answer any interrogatories. Since he had been placed in confinement he had not moved from his present attitude. The guard, finding all attempts at conversation fruitless, had fallen into a reverie, and regaled himself with pieces of straw plucked from the mattress. A mouse ran across the floor. The silence contrasted strangely with the hum of voices in the street.

The candlelight falling across the prisoner's forehead showed the features which Smith's Pocket knew and recognized as Waters, the strange prospector. Had Miss or Aristides seen him then they would have missed that sinister expression which was part of their fearful remembrance. The hard, grim outlines of his mouth were bent and contracted; the quick, searching eyes were fixed on vacancy. The strong man—physically strong only—was breaking up. The fist that might have felled an ox could do nothing more than separate its idle fingers with childishness of power and purpose. An hour later in this condition, and the gallows would have claimed a figure scarcely less limp and impotent than that it was ultimately destined to reject.

He had been trying to collect his thoughts. Would they hang him? No, they must try him first, legally, and he could prove—he could prove—but what could he prove? For whenever he attempted to consider the uncertain chances of

his escape he found his thoughts straying wide of the question. It was of no use for him to clasp his fingers or knit his brows. Why did the recollection of a school-fellow, long since forgotten, blot out all the fierce and feverish memories of the night and the terrible certainty of the future? Why did the strips of paper hanging from the wall recall to him the pattern of a kite he had flown forty years ago? In a moment like this, when all his energies were required, and all his cunning and tact would be called into service, could he think of nothing better than trying to match the torn paper on the wall or to count the cracks in the floor? And an oath rose to his lips, but from very feebleness died away without expression.

Why had he ever come to Smith's Pocket? If he had not been guided by that hell cat, this would not have happened. What if he were to tell all he knew!—what if he should accuse her?—but would they be willing to give up the bird they had already caught? Yet he again found himself cursing his own treachery and cowardice, and this time an exclamation burst from his lips and attracted the attention of the guard.

"Hello there!—easy—old fellow—thar ain't any good in that!"—said the sentinel, looking up. "It's a bad fix you're in, sure, but rarin' and pitchin' won't help things. Taint no use, cussin'—leastways taint that kind o' swearin' that gets a chap out o' here," he added with a conscientious reservation; "Now ef I was in your place I'd kinder reflect on my sins, and make my peace with God Almighty, for I tell you the looks o' them people outside ain't pleasant. You're in the hands of the law, and the law will protect you as far as it can—as far as two men kin stand agin a hundred—sabe? That's what's the matter!—and it's as well as you knowed that now as at any time."

But the prisoner had relapsed into his old attitude and was surveying the jailer with the same abstracted air as before. That individual resumed his seat on the mattress, and now leant his ear to a colloquy which seemed to be progressing at the foot of the stairs. Presently he was hailed by his brother turnkey from below.

"O, Bill," said fidus Achates from the passage, with the usual Californian prefatory ejaculation.

"Well."

"Here's Miss! Says she wants to come up. Shall I let her in?"

The subject of inquiry, however, settled the question of admission by darting past the guard below in this moment of preoccupation and bounded up the stairs like a young fawn. The guards laughed. "Now, then, my infant phenomenon," said the one called Bill, as Miss

stood panting before him, "wot's up—and nextly, wot's in that bottle?"

Miss whisked the bottle which she held in her hand smartly under her apron and said, courtly, "Where's him that killed the parson?"

"Yonder," replied the man, indicating the abstracted figure with his hand. "Wot do you want with him?—None of your tricks here now," he added, warningly.

"I want to see him!"

"Well, look! make the most of your time and his too for the matter of that, but mind now, no nonsense, Miss, he won't stand it!" repeated the guard, with an emphasis in the caution.

Miss crossed the room until opposite the prisoner. "Are you the chap that killed the parson?" she said, addressing the motionless figure.

Something in the tone of her voice startled the prisoner from his reverie; he raised his head and glanced quickly and with his old sinister expression at the child.

"What's that to you?" he asked, with the grim lines setting about his mouth again, and the old hardness of his voice.

"Didn't I tell you he wouldn't stand any of your nonsense, Miss," said the guard, testily.

Miss only repeated the question.

"And what if I did kill him?" said the prisoner, savagely; "what's that to you, you you hell cat. Guard! Damnation! What do you let her come here for? Do you hear, Guard?" he screamed, rising in a transport of passion, "Take her away; fling her down-stairs. What the hell is she doing here?"

"If you was the man that killed McSnagley," said Miss, without heeding the interruption, "I've brought you something," and she drew the bottle from under her apron and extended it to Waters, adding, "It's brandy—Cognac—A.1."

"Take it away, and take yourself with it," returned Waters, without abating his angry accents, "take it away—do you hear?"

"Well, that's what I call ongrateful—Jog gone my skin if it ain't," said the guard, who had been evidently struck with Miss's generosity. "Pas the licker this way, my beauty, and I'll keep it till he changes his mind. He's naturally a little flustered just now, but he'll come round after you go."

"But Miss didn't accede to this change in the disposition of the gift, and was evidently taken aback by her reception and the refusal of the proffered comfort.

"Come, hand the bottle here," repeated the guard. "It's agin rules to bring the pris'ner anything anyway, and it's confiscated to the

law. It's agin the rules too to ask a pris'ner any question that'll crim'nate him, and on the whole you'd better go, Miss," added the guard, to whom the appearance of the bottle had been the means of provoking a spasm of discipline.

But Miss refused to make over the coveted treasure. Bill arose half-jestingly and endeavored to get possession of the bottle. A struggle ensued, good-naturedly on the part of the guard, but characterized on the part of Miss by that half-savage passion which any thwarted whim of instinct was sure to provoke in her nature. At last, with a curse, she freed her arm from his grasp, and seizing the bottle by the neck, aimed it with the full strength of her little arm fairly at his head. But he was quick enough to avert that important object, if not quick enough to save his shoulder from receiving the strength of the blow, which shattered the thin glass and poured the fiery contents of the bottle over his shirt and breast, saturating his clothes, and diffusing a sharp alcoholic odor through the room.

A forced laugh broke from his lips as he sank back on the mattress, not without an underlying sense of awe at this savage girl who stood panting before him, and from whom he had just escaped a blow which might have been fatal. "It's a pity to waste so much good liquor," he added, with affected carelessness, narrowly watching each movement of the young Pythoness, whose rage was not yet abated.

"Come, Miss," he said, at last, "we'll say quits. You've lost your brandy, and I've got some of the pieces of yonder bottle sticking in my shoulder yet. I suppose brandy is good for bruises though. Hand me the light!"

Miss reached the candle from the sconce and held it by the guard as he turned back the collar of his shirt to lay bare his shoulder. "So," he muttered, "black and blue—no bones broken though—no fault of yours, eh! my young cherub, if it wasn't. There—why, what are you looking at in that way, Miss, are you crazy?—Hell's furies, don't hold the light so near? What are you doing—hell—ho, there! Help!

Too late, for in an instant he was a sheet of living flame. When or how the candle had touched his garment, saturated with the inflammable fluid, Waters, the only inactive spectator of the room, could never afterward tell. He only knew that the combustion was instantaneous and complete, and before the cry had died from his lips, not only the guard, but the straw mattress on which he had been sitting, and the loose strips of paper hanging from the walls, and the torn cloth ceiling above, were in flames. Help! help! Fire! fire!

With a superhuman effort, Miss dragged the prisoner past the blazing mattress, through the

doorway into the passage, and drew the door, which opened outwardly, against him. The unhappy guard, still blazing like a funeral pyre, after wildly beating the air with his arms for a few seconds, dashed at the broken window, which gave way with his weight, and precipitated him, still flaming, into the yard below. A column of smoke and a licking tongue of flame leaped from the open window, at the same moment, and the cry of fire was re-echoed from a hundred voices in the street. But scarcely had Miss closed the open door against Waters, when the guard from the doorway mounted the stairs in time to see a flaming figure leap from the window. The room was filled with smoke and fire. With an instinct of genius, Miss, pointing to the open window, shouted hoarsely in his ear:

"Waters has escaped!"

A cry of fury from the guard was echoed from the stairs, even now crowded by the excited mob who feared the devastating element might still cheat them of their intended victim. In another moment the house was emptied, and the front street deserted, as the people rushed to the rear of the jail—climbing fences and stumbling into ditches in pursuit of the imagined runaway. Miss seized the hat and coat of the luckless "Bill," and dragging the prisoner from his place of concealment, hurriedly equipped him, and hastened through the blinding smoke of the staircase boldly on the heels of the retiring crowd. Once in the friendly darkness of the street, it was easy to mingle with the pushing throng until an alley crossing at right angles enabled them to leave the main thoroughfare. A few moments' rapid flight, and the outskirts of the town were reached, the tall pines opened their abysmal aisles to the fugitives, and Miss paused with her companion. Until daybreak, at least, here they were safe!

From the time they had quitted the burning room to that moment, Waters had passed into his listless, abstracted condition, so helpless

and feeble that he retained the grasp of Miss's hand more through some instinctive prompting rather than the dictates of reason. Miss had found it necessary to almost drag him from the main street and the hurrying crowd, which seemed to exercise a strange fascination over his bewildered senses. And now he sat down passively beside her, and seemed to submit to the guidance of her superior nature.

"You're safe enough now till daylight," said Miss, when she had recovered her breath, "but you must make the best time you can through these woods to-night, keeping the wind to your back, until you come to the Wingdam road. There! Do you hear!" said Miss, a little vexed at her companion's apathy.

Waters released the hand of Miss, and commenced mechanically to button his coat around his chest with fumbling, purposeless fingers. He then passed his hand across his forehead, as if to clear his confused and bewildered brain. All this, however, to no better result than to apparently root his feet to the soil and to intensify the stupefaction which seemed to be creeping over him.

"Be quick now. You've no time to lose! Keep straight on through the woods until you see the stars again before you, and you're on the other side of the ridge. What are you waiting for?" and Miss stamped her little foot impatiently.

An idea which had been struggling for expression at last seemed to dawn in his eyes. Something like a simpering blush crept over his face as he fumbled in his pocket. At last, drawing forth a twenty-dollar piece, he bashfully proffered it to Miss. In a twinkling the extended arm was stricken up, and the bright coin flew high in the air and disappeared in the darkness.

"Keep your money! I don't want it. Don't do that again!" said Miss, highly excited, "or I'll—I'll bite you!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

## CLEANING UP.

As the master, wan-eyed and unrefreshed by slumber, strayed the next morning among the blackened ruins of the site, he was conscious of having undergone some strange revulsion of sentiment. What he remembered of the last evening's events, though feverish and indistinct as a dream, without coherency or connected outline, had nevertheless seriously impressed him. How frivolous and trifling his past life and its pursuits looked through the lightning vista opened to his eyes by the flash of Waters's pistol?

"Suppose I had been killed," ruminated the master, "what then? A paragraph in the Banner, headed, 'Fatal Affray,' and my name added to the already swollen list of victims to lawless violence and crime! Humph! A pretty scrape, truly!" And the master ground his teeth with vexation.

Let not the reader judge him too hastily. In the best regulated mind thankfulness for deliverance from danger is apt to be mingled with some doubts as to the necessity of the trial.

In this frame of mind the last person he would have cared to meet was Clytie. That young woman's evil genius, however, led her to pass the burnt district that morning. Perhaps she had anticipated the meeting. At all events, she had proceeded but a few steps before he was confronted by the identical round hat and cherry-colored ribbons. But in his present humor the cheerful color somehow reminded him of the fire, and of a ruddy stain over McSnagley's heart, and invested the innocent Clytie with a figurative significance. Now, Clytie's reveries at that moment were pleasant, if the brightness on her eyes and freshened color on her cheeks were any sign, and as she had not seen the master since then, she naturally expected to take up the thread of romance where it had been dropped. But it required all her feminine tact to conceal her embarrassment at his formal greeting and constrained manner.

"He is bashful," reasoned Clytie to herself. "This girl is a tremendous fool," growled the master, inwardly. An awkward pause ensued. Finally, Clytie loquuted:

"Miss has been missing since the fire!"

"Missing!" echoed the master, in his natural tone.

Clytie bit her lip with vexation. "Yes, she's always running away. She'll be back again. But you look interested. Do you know," she continued with exceeding archness, "I sometimes think, Mr Gray, if Miss were a little older—"

"Well!"

"Well, putting this and that together, you know!"

"Well?"

"People will talk, you know!" continued Clytie, with that excessive fondness weak people exhibit when enveloping in mystery the commonest affairs of life.

"People are d—d fools!" roared the master.

The correct Clytie was a little shocked. Perhaps underneath it was a secret admiration of the transgressor. Force, even of this cheap quality, goes a good way with some natures.

"That is!"—continued the master, with an increase of dignity, in inverse proportion to the lapse he had made—"people are apt to be mistaken, Miss Morpher, and without meaning it, to do infinite injustice to their fellow mortals. But I see I am detaining you. I will try and find Melissa. I wish you good morning." And Don Whiskerandos stalked solemnly away.

Clytie turned red and white by turns, and her eyes filled with tears. This demeanour to her dreams was utterly unexpected. While a girl of stronger intelligence would have employed the time in cogitating plans of future retaliation and revenge, Clytie's dull brain and placid nature were utterly perplexed and shaken.

"Dear me!" said Clytie, to herself, as she started home, "if he don't love me, why don't he say so?"

The master, or Mr. Gray, as we may now call him as he draws near the close of his professional career, took the old trail through the forest which led to Miss's former hiding-place. He walked on briskly, revolving in his mind the feasibility of leaving Smith's Pocket. The late disaster, which would affect the prosperity of the settlement for some time to come, offered an excuse to him to give up his situation. On searching his pockets he found his present capital to amount to ten dollars. This, increased by forty dollars due him from the trustees, would make fifty dollars; deduct thirty dollars for liabilities, and he would have twenty dollars left to begin the world anew. Youth and hope added an indefinite number of ciphers to the right hand of these figures, and in this sanguine mood our young Alnascher walked on until he had reached the old pine throne in the bank of the forest. Miss was not there. He sat down on the trunk of the tree, and for a few minutes gave himself to the associations it suggested. What would become of Miss after he was gone? But he quickly dropped the subject as one too visionary and sentimental for his then fiercely practical consideration, and to prevent the recurrence of such distracting fancies, began to retrace his steps toward the settlement. At the

edge of the woods, at a point where the trail forked toward the old site of Smith's Pocket, he saw Miss coming toward him. Her ordinary pace on such occasions was a kind of Indian trot; to his surprise she was walking slowly with her apron thrown over her head, an indication of meditation with Miss, and the usual way in which she excluded the outer world in studying her lessons. When she was within a few feet of him he called her by name. She started as she recognized him. There was a shade of seriousness in her dark eyes, and the hand that took his was listless and totally unlike her old frank, energetic grasp. "You look worried, Miss," said Mr. Gray, soothingly, as the old sentimental feeling crept over his heart. "What's the matter now?"

Miss replied by seating herself upon the bank beside the road, and pointing to a place by her side. Mr. Gray took the proffered seat. Miss then fixed her eyes on some distant part of the view and remained for some moments in silence. Then without turning her head or moving her eyes, she asked:

"What's that they call a girl that has money left her?"

"An heiress, Miss?"

"Yes, a heiress."

"Well," said Mr. Gray.

"Well," said Miss, without moving her eyes.

"I'm one, I'm a heiress!"

"What's that, Miss?" said Mr. Gray, laughingly.

Miss was silent again. Suddenly turning her eyes full upon him, she said:

"Can you keep a secret?"

"Yes," said Mr. Gray, beginning to be impressed by the child's manner.

"Listen, then."

In short, quick sentences, Miss began. How Aristides had several times hinted of the concealed riches of Smith's Pocket. How he had, last night, repeated the story to her of a strange discovery he had made. How she remembered to have heard her father often swear that there was money "in that hole," if he only had means to work it. How, partly impressed by this statement, and partly from curiosity and pity for the prisoner, she had visited him in confinement. An account of her interview. The origin of the fire. Her flight with Waters. [Questions by Mr. Gray:—What was your object in assisting this man to escape? Ans. They were going to kill him. Ques. Hadn't he killed McSnagley? Ans. Yes, but McSnagley ought to have been killed long ago.] How she had taken leave of him that morning. How she had dragged him on toward the Wingdam road, and how he had told her that all the hidden wealth of

Smith's Pocket had belonged to her father. How she had found out, from some questions, that he had known her father. But how all his other answers were "silly."

"And where is he now?" asked Mr. Gray.

"Gone," said Miss. "I left him at the edge of the wood to go back and get some provisions and when I returned he was gone. If he had any of his senses left he's miles away by this time. When he was off I went back to Smith's Pocket. I found the hidden opening and saw the gold."

Mr. Gray looked at her curiously. He had, in his more intimate knowledge of her character, noticed the unconcern with which she spoke of the circumstances of her father's death and the total lack of any sentiment of filial regard. The idea that this man whom she had aided in escaping had ever done her injury had not apparently entered her mind, nor did Mr. Gray think it necessary to hint the deeper suspicion he had gathered from Dr. Duchesne that Waters had murdered her father. If the story of the concealed treasures of Smith's Pocket were exaggerated he could easily satisfy himself on that point. Miss met his suggestion to return to the Pocket with alacrity, and the two started away in that direction.

It was late in the afternoon when Mr. Gray returned. His heightened color and eager inquiry for Dr. Duchesne provoked the usual hope from the people that he met "That it was nothing serious." No, nothing was the matter, the master answered with a slight laugh, but would they send the doctor to his school-house when he returned? "I at young chap's worse than he thinks," was one sympathizing suggestion; "this kind of life is too rough for his sort."

To while away the interim, Mr. Gray stopped on his way to the school-house at the stage office as the Wingdam stage drew up and disgorged its passengers. He was listlessly watching the passengers as they descended, when a soft voice from the window addressed him: "May I trouble you for your arm as I get down?" Mr. Gray looked up. It was a singular request, as the driver was at that moment standing by the door, apparently for that purpose. But the request came from a handsome woman, and with a bow the young man stepped to the door. The lady laid her hand lightly on his arm, sprang from the carriage with the dexterity that showed the service to have been merely ceremonious, thanked him with an elaboration of acknowledgements which seemed equally gratuitous, and disappeared in the office.

"That's what I call a dead set," said the driver, drawing a long breath, as he turned to Mr.

Gray, who stood in some embarrassment. "Do you know her?"

"No," said Mr. Gray, laughingly, "do you?"

"Nary time! But take care of yourself, young man. She's after you sure!"

But Mr. Gray was continuing his walk to the school-house, unmindful of the caution. From the momentary glimpse he had caught of this woman's face, she appeared to be about thirty. Her dress, though tasteful and elegant, in the present condition of California society afforded no criterion of her social status. But the figure of Dr. Duchesne, waiting for him at the school-house door, just then usurped the place of all others, and she dropped out of his mind.

"Now, then," said the doctor, as the young man grasped his hand, "you want me to tell you why your eyes are bloodshot, why your cheeks turn, and your hand is dry and hot?"

"Not exactly! Perhaps you'll understand the symptoms better when you've heard my story. Sit down here and listen."

The doctor took the proffered seat on the top of a desk, and Mr. Gray, after assuring himself that they were entirely alone, related the circumstances which he had gathered from Miss that morning.

"You see, doctor, how unjust were your surmises in regard to this girl," continued Mr. Gray. "But let this pass now. At the conclusion of her story, I offered to go with her to this Ali Baba cave. It was no easy job finding the concealed entrance, but I found it at last, and ample corroboration of every item of this wild story. The 'Pocket' is rich with the most valuable ore. It has evidently been worked for some time since the discovery was made, but there is still a fortune in its walls, and several thousand dollars of ore sacked up in its galleries. Look at that!" continued Mr. Gray, as he drew an oblong mass of quartz and metal from his pocket, "Think of a secret of this kind having been entrusted for three weeks to a penniless orphan girl of twelve, and an eccentric school boy of ten, and undivulged except when a proper occasion offered."

Dr. Duchesne smiled. "And Waters is really clear?"

"Yes," said Mr. Gray.

"And Miss assisted him to escape."

"Yes."

"Well, you are an innocent one! And you see nothing in this but an act of thoughtless generosity? No assisting of an old accomplice to escape?"

"I see nothing but truth in her statement," returned Mr. Gray, stoutly. "If there has been any wrong committed, I believe her to be innocent of its knowledge."

"Well, I'm glad, at least the money goes to her and not to him. But how are you to establish her right to this property?"

"That was my object in conferring with you. At present the claim is abandoned. I have 'taken up' the ground in my own name (for her), and this afternoon I posted up the usual notice."

"Go on. You are not so much of a fool, after all."

"Thank you. This will hold until a better claim is established. Now, if Smith had discovered this lead, and was, as the lawyers say, 'seized and possessed' of it at the time of his death, Miss, of course, as next of kin, inherits it."

"But how can this be proved? It is the general belief that Smith committed suicide through extreme poverty and destitution."

Mr. Gray drew a letter from his pocket.

"You remember the memorandum I showed you, which came into my possession. Here it is; it is dated the day of his death."

Dr. Duchesne took it and read:

"July 25.—5 hours in drift—dipping west. Took out 20 oz.—cleaned up 40 oz.—Mem.—Saw M. S."

"This evidently refers to actual labor in the mine at the time," said Dr. Duchesne. "But is it legally sufficient to support a claim of this magnitude? That is the only question now. You say this paper was the leaf of an old memorandum, torn off and used for a letter by Miss—do you know where the original book can be found?"

"A istides has it, or knows where it is," answered Mr. Gray.

"Find it by all means. And get legal advice before you do anything. Go this very evening to Judge Plunkett and state your case to him. The promise of a handsome contingent fee won't hurt Miss's prospects any. Remember our ideas of abstract justice, and the letter of the law in this case may be entirely different. Take Judge Plunkett your proofs—that is," said the doctor, stopping and eyeing his friend, keenly, "if you have no fears for Miss if this matter should be thoroughly ventilated."

Mr. Gray did not falter.

"I go at once," said he, gayly, "if only to prove the child's claim to a good name if we fail in getting her property."

The two men left the school-house together. As they reached the main street the doctor paused.

"You are still determined?"

"I am," responded the young man.

"Good-night, and God speed you then," and the doctor left him.

The fire had been particularly severe on the legal fraternity in the settlement, and Judge Plunkett's office, together with those of his learned brethren, had been consumed with the court-house on the previous night. The judge's house was on the outskirts of the village, and with Mr. Gray proceeded. The judge was at home, but engaged at that moment. Mr. Gray would wait, and was ushered into a small room evidently used as a kitchen, but just then littered with law books, bundles of papers and blanks, that had been hastily rescued from the burning building. The side-board groaned with the weight of several volumes of "New York Reports," that seemed to impart a dusty flavor to the adjoining victual. M. Gray picked up a volume of supreme court decisions from the coal skuttle, and was deep in an interesting case when the door of the adjoining room opened, and Judge Plunkett appeared.

He was an only man of about fifty, with spectacles. He was glad to see the schoolmaster. He hoped he was not suffering from the excitement of the previous evening. For his part the spectacle of sober citizens rising in a body to vindicate the insulted majesty of the laws of society and of man, had always something sublime in it. And the murderer had really got away, after all. And it was a narrow escape the schoolmaster had, too, at Smith's Pocket.

Mr. Gray took advantage of the digression to state his business. He briefly recounted the circumstances of the discovery of the hidden wealth of Smith's Pocket, and exhibited the memorandum he had shown to the doctor. When he had concluded, Judge Plunkett looked at him over his spectacles, and rubbed his hands with satisfaction.

"You apprehend," said the judge, eagerly, "that you will have no difficulty in procuring this book from which the leaf was originally torn?"

"None," replied Mr. Gray.

"Then, sir, I should give as my professional opinion that the case was already won."

Mr. Gray shook the hand of the little man with great fervor, and thanked him for his belief. "And so this property will go entirely to Miss?" he asked again.

"Well—ah—no—not exactly," said Judge Plunkett, with some caution. "She will benefit by it undoubtedly—undoubtedly," and he rubbed his hands again.

"Why not Miss alone. There are no other claimants?" said Mr. Gray.

"I beg your pardon—you mistake," said Judge Plunkett, with a smile, "you surely would not leave out the widow and mother?"

"Why, Miss is an orphan," said Mr. Gray, in utter bewilderment.

"A sad mistake, sir. A painful, though natural, mistake. Mr. Smith, though separated from his wife, was never divorced. A very affecting history—the old story you know—an injured and loving woman, deserted by her natural protector, but disdaining to avail herself of our legal aid. By a singular coincidence that I should have told you, I am anticipating you in this very case. Your service, however, I feel will be invaluable. Your concern for her amiable and interesting daughter, Narcissa—ah, no, Melissa—will, of course, make you with us. You have never seen Mrs. Smith? A fine-looking, noble woman, sir—though still disconsolate—still thinking of the departed one. By another singular coincidence that I should have told you, she is here now. You shall see her, sir. Pray, let me introduce you," and still rubbing his hands, Judge Plunkett led the way to the adjoining room.

Mr. Gray followed him mechanically. A handsome woman rose from the sofa as they entered. It was the woman he assisted to alight from the Windgam stage.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE BED-BOOK.

In the strong light that fell upon her face, Mr. Gray had an opportunity to examine her features more closely. Her eyes, which were dark and singularly brilliant, were half closed, either from some peculiar conformation of the lids, or an habitual effort to conceal expression. Her skin was colorless, with that satin-like lustre that belongs to some brunettes, relieved by one or two freckles that were scarcely blemishes. Her face was squared a little at the lower angles, but the chin was round and soft, and the curves about the mouth full and tender enough to destroy the impression left by contemplation of those rigid outlines. The effect of its general contour was that of a handsome woman of thirty. In detail, as the eye dwelt upon any particular feature, you could have added a margin of ten years, either way.

"Mrs. Smith—Mr. Gray," said the lawyer, briskly. "Mr. Gray is the gentleman who, since the decease of your husband, has taken such a benevolent interest in our playful Narcissa—Melissa, I should say. He is the preceptor of our district school, and besides his relation as teacher to your daughter, has, I may say in our

legal fashion, stood in loco parentis—in other words, has been a parent, a—father to her."

At the conclusion of this speech, Mrs. Smith darted a quick glance at Mr. Gray, which was unintelligible to any but a woman. As there were none of her own keen-witted sex present, to make an ungracious interpretation of it, it passed unnoticed, except the slight embarrassment and confusion it caused the young man from its apparent gratuity.

"We have met before, I believe," said Mrs. Smith, with her bright eyes half hid, and her white teeth half disclosed. "I can easily imagine Mr. Gray's devotion to a friend from his courtesy to a stranger. Let me thank you again for both my daughter and myself."

In the desperate hope of saying something natural, Mr. Gray asked if she had seen Melissa yet.

"O dear, no! Think how provoking. Judge Plunkett says it is absolutely impossible till some tiresome formalities are over. There are so many stupid forms to go through with first. But how is she? You have seen her, have you not? you will see her again to-night, perhaps? How I long to embrace her again. She was a mere baby when she left me. Tell her how I long to fly to her!"

Her impassioned utterance and the dramatic gestures that accompanied these words afforded a singular contrast to the cool way with which she rearranged the folds of her dress, when she had finished; folding her hands over her lap and settling herself unmistakably back again on the sofa. Perhaps it was this that made Mr. Gray think she had, at some time, been an actress. But the next moment he caught her eye again and felt pleased—and again vexed with himself for being so—and in this mental condition began to speak in favor of his old pupil. His embarrassment passed away as he warmed with his subject, dwelling at length on Miss's better qualities, and did not return until in a breathless pause he became aware that this woman's bright eyes were bent upon him. The color rose in his cheek, and with a half-muttered apology for his prolixity, he offered his excuses to retire.

"Stay a moment, Mr. Gray," said the lawyer. "You are going to town, and will not think it a trouble to see Mrs. Smith safely back to her hotel. You can talk these things over with our fair friend on the way. To-morrow, at ten, I trust to see you both again."

"Perhaps I am taxing Mr. Gray's gallantry too much," interposed the lady with a very vivid disclosure of eyes and teeth.

"Mr. Gray would be only too happy."

After he had uttered this civility, there was a

slight consciousness of truth about it that embarrassed him again. But Mrs. Smith took his proffered arm and they bade the lawyer good-night, and passed out in the starlit night together.

Four weeks have elapsed since the advent of Mrs. Smith to the settlement. Four weeks that might have been years in any other but a California mining camp, for the wonderful change that has been wrought in its physical aspect. Each stage has brought its load of fresh adventurers; another hotel which sprang up on the site of the National has its new landlord, and a new set of faces about its hospitable board, where the conventional bean appears daily as a modest vegetable, or in the insouciant form of coffee. The saw-mills have been hard at work for the last month, and huge gaps appear in the circling files of redwood where the fallen trees are transmitted to a new style of existence in the damp, sappy tenements that have risen over the burnt district. The "great strike" at Smith's Pocket has been heralded abroad, and above and below, and on either side of the crumbling tunnel that bears that name other tunnels are piercing the bowels of the mountain, shafts are being sunk, and claims are taken up even to the crest of Red Mountain, in the hope of striking the great Smith lead. Already an animated discussion has sprung up in the columns of the Red Mountain Banner in regard to the direction of the famous lead—a discussion assisted by correspondents who have assumed all the letters of the alphabet in their anonymous arguments, and have formed the opposing "angle" and "dip" factions of Smith's Pocket.

But whatever be the direction of the lead, the progress of the settlement has been steadily onward, with an impetus gained by the late disaster. That classical but much-abused bird, the Phoenix, has been invoked from its ashes in several editorials in the Banner to sit as a type of resuscitated Smith's Pocket, while in the homelier phrase of an honest miner "it seemed as if the fire-kem to kinder clean out things for a fresh start."

Meanwhile the quasi-legal administration of the estate of Smith is drawing near a termination that seems to credit the prophetic assertion of Judge Plunkett. One fact has been evolved in the process of examination, viz: that Smith had discovered the new lead before he was murdered. It was a fair hypothesis that the man who assumed the benefit of his discovery was the murderer, but as this did not immediately involve the settlement of the estate it excited little comment or opposition. The probable

murderer had escaped; judicial investigations, even in the hands of the people, had been attended with disastrous public results, and there was no desire on the part of Justice to open the case and deal with an abstract principle when there was no opportunity of making an individual example. The circumstances were being speedily forgotten in the new excitement; even the presence of Mrs. Smith lost its novelty. The Banner, when alluding to her husband, spoke of him as the "late J. Smith, Esq.," attributing the present activity of business as the result of his life-long example of unflinching energy, and generally and the foundation of a belief which thereafter obtained that he died comfortably in the bosom of his family, surrounded by disconsolate friends. The history of all pioneer settlements had this legendary basis, and in the progress of this story Miss may live to see the day when her father's connection with the origin of the settlement shall become apocryphal, and contested like that of Romulus and Remus and their wolfish wet-nurse.

It is to the everlasting credit and honor of Smith's Pocket that the orphan and widow meet no opposition from the speculative community, and that the claim's utmost boundaries are liberally rendered. How far this circumstance may be owing to the rare personal attractions of the charming widow, or to Miss's personal popularity, I shall not pretend to say. It is enough that when the brief of Judge Plunkett's case is ready there are crowds of willing witnesses to substantiate and corroborate doubtful points to an extent that is more creditable to their generosity than their veracity.

Miss has seen her mother. Mr. Gray, with his knowledge of his pupil's impulsiveness, has been surprised to notice that the new relationship seems to awaken none of those emotions in the child's nature that he confidently looked for. On the occasion of their first meeting, to which Mr. Gray was admitted, Miss maintained a guarded shyness totally different from her usually frank boldness—a shyness that was the more remarkable from its contrast with the unrepressed and somewhat dramatic emotions of Mrs. Smith. Now, under her mother's protection and care, he observes another radical change in Miss's appearance. She is dressed more tastefully and neatly—not entirely the result of a mother's influence, but apparently the result of some natural instinct, now for the first time indulged, and exhibited in a ribbon or a piece of jewelry, worn with a certain air and consciousness. There is a more strict attention to the conventionalities of life; her speech is

more careful and guarded; her walk, literally more womanly and graceful. Those things Mr. Gray naturally attributes to the result of the new relation, though he cannot help recalling his meeting with Miss in the woods on the morning of the fire, and of dating many of these changes from thence.

It is a pleasant morning, and Mr. Gray is stirring early. He has been busied in preparation the night previous, for this is his last day in Smith's Pocket. He lingers for some time about the schoolhouse, gathering up those little trifles which lay about his desk, which have each a separate history in his experience of Smith's Pocket, and are part of the encrustations of his life. Lastly, a file of the Red Mountain Banner is taken from the same receptacle and packed away in his bag. He walks to the door and turns to look back. Has he forgotten anything? No, nothing. But still he lingers. He wonders who will take his place at the desk, and for the first time in his pedagogic experience, perhaps, feels something of an awful responsibility as he thinks of his past influence over the wretched little beings who used to tremble at his nod, and whose future ill or good he may have helped to fashion. At last he closes the door, almost tenderly, and walks thoughtfully down the road. He has to pass the cabin of an Irish miner, whose little boy is toddling in the ditch, with pinafore, hands, and face in a chronic state of untidiness. Mr. Gray seizes him with a hilarious impulse, and after a number of rapid journeys to Banbury Cross in search of an apocryphal old woman who mounted a mythical white horse, he kissed the cleanest place on his broad expanse of cheek, presses some silver into his chubby fist, tells him to be a good boy, and deposits him in the ditch again. Having in this youthful way atoned for certain sins of omission a little further back, he proceeds, with a sense of perfect absolution, on his way to the settlement.

A few hours lie between him and his departure, to be employed in friendly visits to Mrs. Morpher, Dr. Duchesne, Miss, and her mother. The Mountain Ranch is the nearest, and thither Mr. Gray goes first. Mrs. Morpher, over a kneading trough, with her bare arm whitened with flour, is genuinely grieved at parting with the master, and in spite of Mr. Gray's earnest remonstrances, insists upon conducting him into the chill parlor, leaving him there until she shall have attired herself in a manner becoming to "company." "I don't want you to go at all—no more I don't," said Mrs. Morpher, with all sincerity, as she seats herself finally on the shining horse-hair sofa. "The children will



miss you. I don't believe that any one will do for Rusty, Kerg, and Clytie, what you have done. But I suppose you know best what's best. Young men like to see the world, and it ain't expected one so young as you should settle down yet. That's what I was telling Clytie this morning. That was just the way with my John afore he was married. I suppose you'll see Miss and Her before you go. They say that she is going to San Francisco soon. Is it so?"

Mr. Gray understands the personal pronoun to refer to Mrs. Smith, a title Mrs. Morpher never granted Miss's mother, for whom she entertained an instinctive dislike. He answers in the affirmative, however, with a consciousness of uneasiness under the inquiry; and as the answer does not seem to please Mrs. Morpher, he is constrained to commend Miss's manifest improvement under her mother's care.

"Well," said Mrs. Morpher, with a significant sigh, "I hope it's so; but bless us, where's Clytie? you musn't go without saying 'good-by' to her," and Mrs. Morpher started away in search of her daughter.

The dining-room scarcely closes before the bed-room door opens, and Clytie crosses the parlor softly with something in her hands. "You are going now?" said Clytie, hurriedly.

"Yes."

"Will you take this," she said, putting a sealed package into his hand, "and keep it, without opening it, until—"

"Until when, Clytie?"

"Until you're married?"

Mr. Gray laughed.

"Promise me," repeated Clytie.

"But I may expire in the meantime, through sheer curiosity," said Mr. Gray.

"Promise," said Clytie, gravely.

"I promise, then."

Mr. Gray received the package. "Good-by," said Clytie, softly.

Clytie's rosy cheek was very near Mr. Gray. There was nobody by. He was going away. It was the last time. He kisses her just before the door opens again to Mrs. Morpher.

Another shake of hands all round, and Mr. Gray passed out of the Mountain Ranch forever.

Dr. Duchesne's office is near at hand, but for some reason that Mr. Gray cannot entirely explain to himself, he prefers to go to Mrs. Smith's first. The little cottage which they have taken temporarily is soon reached; and as the young man stands at the door he reknits the bow of his cravat and passes his fingers through his curls—trifles that to Dr. Duchesne or any other critical middle-aged person might look bad.

Miss and Mrs. Smith are both at home. They

have been waiting for him so long. Was it that pretty daughter of Mrs. Morpher—the fair young lady with blonde curls—who caused the detention? Is not Mr. Gray a sly young fellow for all his seeming frankness? So he must go to-day. He cannot possibly wait a few days, and so go with them? Thus Mrs. Smith, between her red lips and white teeth, and under her half-closed eyes, for Miss stands quietly apart without speaking. Her reserve during the interview contrasts with the vivacity of her mother as though they had changed respective places in relationship. Mr. Gray is troubled by this and as he rises to go he takes Miss's hand in his.

"Have you nothing to say to me before I go," he asked.

"Good-by," said Miss.

"Nothing more?"

"That's enough," rejoined the child simply.

Mr. Gray bit his lips.

"I may never see you again, you know, Miss," he continued.

"You will see us again," said Miss, quietly, raising her great dark eyes to his.

The blood mounted to his cheek and crimsoned his forehead. He was conscious, too, that the mother's face had taken fire at his own, as she walked away toward the window.

"Good-by, then," said Mr. Gray, pettishly, as he stooped to kiss her.

Miss accepted the salute, stoically.

Mr. Gray took Mrs. Smith's hand; her face had resumed its colorless, satin-like sheen.

"Miss knows the strength of your good will, and makes her calculations accordingly. I hope she may not be mistaken," she said, with a languid tenderness of voice and eye.

The young man bent a moment over her outstretched hand and withdrew, as the Wingdam stage noisily rattled up before the National Hotel.

There was but little time left to spend with Dr. Duchesne, so the physician walked with him to the stage-office. There were a few of the old settlers lounging by the stage, who had discerned, just as the master was going away, how much they liked him. Mr. Gray had gone through the customary bibulous formula of leave-taking; with a hearty shake of the doctor's hand, and a promise to write, he climbed to the box of the stage.

"All aboard!" cried the driver, and with a preliminary bound, the stage rolled down Main street.

Mr. Gray remained buried in thought as they rolled through the town, each object in passing recalling some incident of his past experience. The stage had reached the outskirts of the set-

tlement when he detected a well-known little figure running down a by-trail to intersect the road before the stage had passed. He called the driver's attention to it, and as they drew up at the crossing Aristides's short legs and well-known features were plainly discernible through the dust. He was holding in his hand a letter.

"Well, my little man, what is it?" said the driver, impatiently.

"A letter for the master," gasped the exhausted child.

"Give it here?—Any answer?"

"Wait a moment," said Mr. Gray.

"Look sharp then, and get your billet doux before you go next time."

Mr. Gray hurriedly broke the seal and read these words:

"Judge Plunkett has just returned from the county seat. Our case is won. We leave here next week."

J. S."

P. S. Have you got my address in San Francisco?"

"Any answer?" said the driver.

"None!"

"Get-up!"

And the stage rolled away from Smith's Pocket leaving the just Aristides standing in the dust of his triumphal wheels.

## CHAPTER X.

### INTO THE GREAT WORLD.

During his ride, Mr. Gray had time for reflection. The driver had relapsed into a hard silence. He experienced a feeling of resentment at the utter disregard of his dignity implied in the assumption that the Wingdam stage could be stopped under any circumstances. And tipped by a boy in charge of a billet doux. Mr. Gray, as the innocent cause of the irregular proceeding, must be made to feel how great an error the just Aristides had committed.

Mr. Gray's few attempts at propitiation received monosyllabic replies. The driver handled the reins with more masterful ease than usual, and with stoic fortitude inhaled the dust that curled in rosy clouds about the vehicle. The stage wound along the serpentine road, now lost in a bend round a mountain gorge, now seeming to approach the village they had just left behind. There were the white dwellings hanging on the red mountain side, there the school-house in which Mr. Gray had held a brief and not inglorious reign, and there, somewhere in the cluster, was the modest cottage in which dwelt the correct Clytie and the wayward Miss.

In the hour of parting, friends are doubly dear. The master now reproached himself for coldness to the one, and a lack of appreciation of the other. He remembered how tenderly Clytie's blue eyes had been upturned to his face, and he doubted if the sternest code of morals forbade a responsive regard. He recalled, also, Miss's passionate ebullitions of jealousy, and thought what a splendid woman she might make.

At last the stage wound round the summit, and left Smith's Pocket in the rear for the last time. Mr. Gray turned from thoughtful contemplation of the village and looked both the road and his future in the face. The prospect was not displeasing. In the distance the brown hills softened into a vast expanse of plain with belts of silver crossing its breast, here and there, all verging to the same point. The morning sun shone brightly upon these silver belts, and upon that broader expanse of silver beyond the point of meeting, which the eye but faintly discerned.

The great world lay before him. For him the hour for action had come. He had wasted some years, more or less pleasantly, but so far had performed no deed worthy of entry, even in pencil mark, in an every day journal. He took a mental inventory of the implements with which he proposed to push his way in the world. He had youth, health, a fair square of brain, undeniable good looks, a clear conscience, and an honest name. These were his sinews of war.

In the city to which he was hastening, there was one man with whom he could claim acquaintance. He had not seen this man in the last ten years, but he spoke of him as still a resident of San Francisco. His name was Shaw. Mr. Shaw and his own father had been political enemies and personal friends. Mr. Shaw was a native of Kentucky, Mr. Gray's father, of Massachusetts. Both had married in Kentucky, and had practiced law before the same courts.

Mr. Gray remembered Mr. Shaw as the boy of fifteen remembers the prominent man of forty. He recalled a tall, portly figure; a handsome, florid countenance; a man of brilliant social and legal attainments, but reputed to be of somewhat flexible morals. There had been a Miss Shaw, too, a child of seven or eight when they left for California, and a brother a year or two older. He did not know if the children still lived, but Mr. Shaw's name often appeared in the San Francisco papers.

In time they came to the end of the Wingdam stage line. The driver had been gradually unbending for the last two miles, preparatory to the graceful acceptance of that friendly invita-

tion which the box passenger is expected to extend. They alighted in front of an imposing-looking hotel in a pretty half-mining, half-agricultural village; the driver pulled off his gloves, and by a gesture understood only by the initiated, intimated that he was prepared to accept an invitation to drink.

Mr. Gray extended the customary courtesy, and in friendly converse the two approached the bar. The driver looked austere at the bartender, as if he suspected that official might have forgotten his favorite beverage.

"A little sherry, if you please," said Mr. Gray. The driver but half looked the contempt he felt for a man who drank sherry after a long and dusty ride. But in consideration of the fact that Mr. Gray paid for both sherry and whisky, the driver graciously forgave the breach of etiquette of which Mr. Gray had been guilty.

"Hope you'll have luck," said the driver, tossing off a liquor that had not been contaminated with a drop of nature's sparkling beverage.

"Thank you," replied Mr. Gray. He would have returned the courtesy, but it occurred to him that to wish the driver might have luck was equivalent to an expression of doubt as to that gentleman's entire control of Dame Fortune and her minions.

"Spect you see Miss in 'Frisco," said the driver, after a short silence.

"Probably, if I remain in the city. I don't know how that may be."

"Make up your mind to, and you will. A man of your learning ought to thrive in the city."

Mr. Gray bowed his acknowledgment of the compliment conveyed, and suffered the conversation to drop. The driver took a fresh quid of tobacco, eyeing his companion, from time to time, with an inquiring but not unfriendly regard.

"They say you're a man one can depend upon," he said, at last; "suppose we have a word in confidence?"

"As many as you please," replied Mr. Gray. The driver led the way apart from the crowd, and then said:

"Miss will need a friend afore long."

"Miss has her mother—a woman who seems to know the world."

A peculiar expression flitted over the rubicund visage of the driver. He replied with emphasis:

"That's why Miss will need a friend."

Mr. Gray looked up in surprise.

"I don't take any stock in the mother," said the other, with a form of expression more pronounced than the case seemed to call for.

"She seems a pleasant lady," ventured Mr. Gray.

"Yes, in Smith's Pocket. There, every man is Miss's friend."

"But she seems fond of Miss."

"Seems! But is she? What do the facts say?"

Mr. Gray was compelled to admit that the language of the facts was too ambiguous for his reading.

"The facts say," resumed the driver, "that Mrs. Smith was not fond of Miss until Miss was in the way to have money. The facts say that she let the girl grow up a heathen, fed and clothed by people who had no calling to mind if she starved or not. The facts say that she only put in an appearance and a claim when Water could hold the pocket no longer. This is what facts say, and perhaps they say more than that."

"You've made out a strong case against Mrs. Smith," said Mr. Gray, reflectively.

"Not half so strong a case as facts warrant. Who knows that Mrs. Smith, as she calls herself, is Miss's mother at all?"

"Who knows? Wasn't it proved in court?"

"Proved! Of course it was proved—by Mrs. Smith herself."

"And no one else?"

"No one else knows anything about it. When the oldest resident of the Pocket first knew Smith, he had a little harumscarum daughter seven or eight years old, and Smith gave out that her mother was dead. I knew Smith pretty well. He confided in me, and he told me Miss's mother was dead."

Mr. Gray had nothing to offer to this accumulation of evidence.

"Perhaps this doesn't concern you, Mr. Gray; perhaps it doesn't concern me. But if I was goin' to live in 'Frisco, I'd keep an eye on Miss."

There was a touch of reproach in the driver's regard. It seemed to say, "You are the special friend of Miss, and you don't propose to trouble yourself about her; I am nothing to her, but I see the danger that threatens her."

The lofty self-complacency of the driver had amused Mr. Gray, and perhaps inspired a sentiment of dislike, but this feeling now vanished. He held out his hand.

"You are a better friend to Miss than I," he said, "but I'll keep an eye on the child."

Two days after Mr. Gray was in San Francisco. The city did not note his arrival. It did not recognize the Coming Man in the dusty traveler that alighted at the door of the American Exchange, and engaged lodgings without any flourish of trumpets. Mr. Gray himself did not feel that consciousness of being somebody which a stiff financial backing is apt to inspire. He was his own banker, and the responsibilities of the position did not disturb his sleep.

He had the means for a week of idleness—after that he must work.

He lost no time in seeking an interview with Mr. Shaw. It was not an easy matter, however, to approach the great lawyer. Two calls found that gentleman engaged in business, and a third was after business hours. Mr. Shaw was in his private office, but on no account could he be disturbed. After some persuasion, which ultimately assumed a financial aspect, the smart office-boy consented to be the bearer of Mr. Gray's card.

The office-boy returned in due time, somewhat subdued in bearing. He had said that Mr. Shaw would see no one, and Mr. Shaw had consented to see Mr. Gray. It was a kind of breach of confidence on the lawyer's part, which might ultimately interrupt the harmonious relations hitherto existing between employer and employee. Had the lad expressed himself without reserve, he would probably have said it was going back on him in a way he couldn't be expected to stand.

Mr. Gray took a seat, and to while away time picked up a volume of Supreme Court Reports. He was deep in the labyrinth of argument when the door to the private office opened, and a tall, still handsome man of fifty advanced into the room.

Mr. Gray recognized Mr. Shaw. The latter was altered, but not past recognition. He was stouter than the Mr. Shaw of Lexington, Kentucky, his face fuller and more ruddy, but he still retained the easy, commanding bearing which had formerly distinguished him among men.

"My dear boy, I am delighted to see you. How you've grown! Whiskers, too, and mustache. How time flies."

"The last time I saw you," said Mr. Gray, after the hand-shaking was over, "was in the Lexington Court-room. You were defying Dartmouth against the Commonwealth of Kentucky."

"I remember. Dartmouth was guilty, but I received five thousand dollars for persuading a jury to pronounce him innocent. Those were great days. The law is a fine profession. Don't you think so?"

"A great profession for men of great abilities."

"Tut, man; it's work that does it. No man becomes a great lawyer who has not been at some time in his life a great worker. But how goes the world with you? You've not been idle, I suppose, since your arrival in California."

"Not idle, exactly. I've been teaching school."

"And made a failure of it, I hope."

"Thank you; not exactly a failure."

"Well, be content with a partial success. There should be a better career open to your father's son than teaching school. There is no rise in the profession. The mind is engrossed in details. A lawyer thinks; a physician thinks; a clergyman thinks; an editor thinks. A school-teacher only remembers. Now, you've no right to that head, John Gray, unless you use it."

The lawyer mechanically rang a bell at his elbow as he finished speaking, and a moment after the smart office-boy appeared, received an order, and soon after reappeared bearing a tray on which were decanters filled with different kinds of liquor.

"Here," said Mr. Shaw, "is the source to which the best of us come for inspiration. Try a little of this brandy."

"Thank you," replied Mr. Gray, with sudden resolve, "I never drink brandy."

"Whisky, then; I can recommend this?"

"Excuse me; no liquor of any kind."

Mr. Shaw silently poured out a wineglassful of pure brandy, and drank it at a draught.

"You are right," he said; "stick to it. If a man is so constituted that he can live without liquor, he is fortunate. As for me, it is life, strength, vigor. My system requires a tonic. I rise at eight in the morning, dull, listless, and dejected. Work is impossible. The world seems a sorry place. I take a stiff cocktail, and things look better. The air is refreshing. The sun imparts life. After twenty minutes I take my second cocktail; twenty minutes later take a third. It takes three to put me on friendly relations with my breakfast. After breakfast, to work. Everything comes easy. For three hours I am equal to anything. The worst of it is, this feeling of exhilaration does not last. By two in the afternoon I am done for the day. I am glad you don't drink. It is an accursed habit. But my system requires a stimulant."

The observant eye of Mr. Gray had long since discovered that the man before him was but a wreck of what he had once been. His face had lost its tone, his eye its brightness. His talk was rather to himself than to another, and his general aspect that of a man on the verge of breaking up.

The lawyer drank three glasses of brandy at short intervals, as a thirsty man might drink water, and their effect was visible only in a greater animation of manner and more emphasis of speech.

"My dear boy," he said, "I have not seen your father for ten years, but he was one of my best friends. I know a man when I see one, and I like your looks. What are your plans? What do you propose to do?"



"I propose, ultimately, to practice law. My studies, however, are not yet completed."

"Wasted your time teaching school. However, that does not matter. Your coming is opportune. The firm of Shaw & Co., has lost its Co. I don't propose a partnership just yet, but I'll give you an opening. That's all you need."

"That is all I desire. If the opening is not filled, I can go back to teaching school."

"It will be filled. I am never mistaken in a head. I am never mistaken in a character. Now let me lay before you the condition in which the affairs of the firm of Shaw & Co. are at the present time. My best days are past. I am only fifty, but a fast life has used me up. I am old before my time. I have three or four years, perhaps, in which I can be of some use, and after that I shall be simply a figure-head. You see I look the future square in the face."

Mr. Gray could only express the hope that Mr. Shaw looked it too squarely in the face. But the lawyer poured out another glass of brandy, nodded "good luck" to his young friend, and sent it where so many had gone before.

"This is what has done it," he said; "I know that very well; but without it I should be reduced to the condition of figure-head in a week. I propose to prolong the fight so long as I can, not so much because I like the fight, as in the hope of making a better showing when the day of settlement comes."

Mr. Gray was still in doubt to what extent he was indebted to the source of all inspiration for the offer which Mr. Shaw had so precipitately made. It seemed incredible that the lawyer, however perspicacious in judgment of men should throw himself into the arms of a comparative stranger. He waited, therefore, until the lawyer should further develop his purpose.

"I told you," resumed Mr. Shaw, "that the firm of Shaw & Co. had lost its 'Co.' I will now tell you the circumstances attending its loss."

The 'Co.' was represented by a Mr. Hopp. He was a man of some talent and immense industry. There is no better lawyer in the city to work up a case, no worse one to present a case in court. We worked together very well. He prepared everything in a masterly manner, and I, in my department, did the best I could. We had a large practice, and Hopp was growing rich. As he grew rich, he grew ambitious. His ambition prompted him to seek an alliance with my daughter. The young lady declined the honor. Hopp persisted. He was in the habit of overcoming obstacles by sheer persistence. This time, however, the obstacle was a woman's will. He proposed three times, and was three times refused. At last he threatened to ruin me if she persisted in her refusal. This threat roused her Kentucky blood. She replied in terms that suggested a doubt as to the ultimate success of his suit. He responded in kind. More Kentucky blood. Miss Shaw rang for a servant, and directed that functionary to conduct Mr. Hopp to the door. By chance my son appeared upon the scene. My son is not regarded as a success on general principles, but in the line of action that then presented itself he has few equals. The interview was disastrous to Mr. Hopp. It was two weeks before he again appeared in public. His first act was to withdraw from the firm. This is how the firm of Shaw & Co. lost its 'Co.'

"I should say the man was well rid of."

"In a romantic point of view, yes. In a business point of view, no. He was a useful man. As a lawyer, he had the confidence of the public. An indifferent friend, he is a bitter enemy. On the whole, a dangerous enemy to a falling man, like me."

The falling man turned out another glass of brandy. Sinking back in his chair his eyes closed, and to Mr. Gray he seemed a more complete wreck than ever.

## CHAPTER XI.

"SHAW & CO."

Mr. Gray understood sufficiently well that he was expected to restore the shattered fortunes of the once great firm of Shaw & Co. He was not more astonished at the inner view vouchsafed to him of the affairs of the firm than at the means adopted for its restoration. Himself utterly unknown, his law studies but irregularly followed, with no prestige of name, he seemed a weak support for a man of Mr. Shaw's weight to lean upon.

But he went to work with a will. Pretty well read in common law and tolerably familiar with the statutes of the State, a few weeks under the intelligent direction of Mr. Shaw enabled him to pass a creditable examination, and he was admitted a member of the San Francisco bar. At the same time he took the aspiring Hopp's place as the 'Co.' of the firm.

Mr. Shaw's practice at this time was neither large nor profitable. Mr. Hopp had drawn the heaviest clients of the old firm to the firm with which he formed an alliance. Mr. Shaw's habits had inspired public confidence. He was still regarded as a brilliant and powerful advocate, but men with large interests at stake were afraid to trust him.

There came also signs of pecuniary embarrassment. Bills of long standing were urged with provoking persistence. Mr. Shaw evidently had no idea of the value of money. He used it freely until he discovered there was none to use, and then seemed rather surprised than annoyed. He regarded a lack of funds as a kind of joke of which his creditors were the victims. If he did not complain at having no money to pay, surely his creditors should not complain at not being paid.

Mr. Gray gradually became the business man as well as managing partner of the firm. He carried the key of the safe, paid bills which could not be deferred, gave Mr. Shaw such sums as could be spared, and supplied his own more modest wants.

The equanimity of the senior partner was never disturbed. He came to the office every day, bright and smiling, glanced over the business laid out for the day, and mastered details as if by intuition. If money came in freely, he received it graciously; if the cash box was empty he extended his commiseration to his creditors.

Meantime Mr. Gray worked night and day. His perfect health enabled him for a time to defy the laws of nature. He sought no relaxa-

tion, made no acquaintances, and almost forgot the very existence of Miss.

One afternoon Mr. Gray sat in his own private office, busily engaged at a case that was to be called the next morning. Mr. Shaw was in his private office also, busily engaged in sleeping off the effects of a too frequent toning up of his system. The office-boy had asked and obtained a ten minutes' leave of absence, and had been gone something more than an hour. The autumn sun gilded the roofs of the tall buildings opposite, but within the shadows of evening were gathering fast. The young man, wearied with intense application, sat for a moment leaning back in his large office-chair, his hands clasped behind his head. The case under consideration was of some importance, and from a successful issue he looked for substantial results. He had carefully examined every point, and so arranged papers and authorities that fifteen minutes on Mr. Shaw's part would enable that gentleman to present the case in court. A sensation of unusual weariness came over him. For once his thoughts took a wider range than his will often permitted, and carried him back to Smith's Pocket. How calm and happy seemed those idle days by contrast! What a fund of amusement had the elfish Miss afforded, and how pleasant seemed the innocent coquetries of Olytic. Would the latter bestow her roit glances on his successor? Would Miss—

A light tapping at the door of the outer office aroused him. Turning languidly in his chair he beheld the figure of a slight but elegant woman in the doorway, and encountered a pair of curious but smiling eyes. The shadowy light in which she stood did not reveal her features distinctly, but the general effect was that of youth and beauty.

"May I disturb you?" asked a clear and rather imperious voice, in whose tone there was an accent of mock humility, "to ask if Mr. Shaw is in."

"Mr. Shaw is not in," replied Mr. Gray, employing a harmless fiction by which much useless explanation was avoided.

The lady hesitated a moment. Mr. Gray had risen in deference to the sex of Mr. Shaw's visitor, but stood in the attitude of one ready and willing to bow that visitor out rather than persuade her to enter. With the intuitive perception of her sex the lady perceived this indifference to a presence that rarely failed to produce an impression, and perversely determined not to be bowed out.

"Will Mr. Shaw return this evening do you think?"

"Probably not. It is past his office hours."

"Should I disturb you 'very much if I should wait?"

"Not in the least," and he placed a chair at the window and invited her to a seat.

Mr. Gray resumed his seat and his work. He knew perfectly well who had honored him with a visit, but was rather vexed than flattered by her manner of approach. So, without failing in the courtesy due a stranger and a lady, he quietly ignored her presence.

The visitor found waiting rather tedious. She might have repelled an attempt at conversation, but the attempt not being made she could not repress a feeling of resentment at the want of attention. The young man's quick ear caught the soft but impatient tapping of a tiny foot on the carpet, and the occasional click of a parasol. He was not unprepared, therefore, for the movement which brought her once more before him.

"It is growing dark," she said, a little petulantly, as if he was the party to blame.

"Pardon me; since the sun was so inconsiderate as to retire, I will light the gas."

He took a match from the safe, lighted it, turned on the gas, and in a moment the office was flooded with a brilliant light.

It would have been an affectation of indifference not to cast a glance upon the lady who stood thus revealed. A lovelier girl he had never seen. Just in the flush of youth, with a woman's maturity of form, a woman's intelligence in her eyes, a certain poise to her head and grace of carriage which bespoke a lady accustomed to the most refined society, she seemed to combine in her person the two most charming periods in the life of her sex—girlhood and early womanhood.

But Mr. Gray was not in a humor to be charmed. For six months this proud girl had ignored his existence, when a friendly word would have given him a world of courage for the unequal strife in which he had been engaged. Nature had so constructed him that he could not be deficient in courtesy to a woman, but habit had given him that supreme self control which enabled him to repress the slightest sign of the admiration that was justly her due.

The glimpse of a smile hovered for a moment on the scarlet lips of the young girl as her eyes met his. It was an approach to acquaintance which quickly died away beneath his unresponsive regard. She turned, biting her red lips, approached the window and stood there looking out into the street.

Five minutes thus passed. The young lawyer seemed to find a volume of Supreme Court Reports more entertaining than a contemplation of

youth and beauty. The young girl half-turned her head, doubtless expecting to detect him in a stealthy glance, but even this little triumph was denied her. A handsome profile and the side of a well-shaped head covered with dark curly hair, was all of him that met her view.

Somehow her resentment vanished. The profile was undeniably handsome; the man was evidently a gentleman. She consoled herself with the reflection that he might not be accustomed to ladies' society, and that being alone with her in his own office he was somewhat too scrupulous not to offend.

At last, made bold by this reflection, she advanced and stood by his side.

"Is that book so very entertaining?" she asked.

"Yes; it has, for me, all the charm of fiction."

"Will you lend it to me—sometime?"

"I will give you another copy to read while you choose to remain."

"Thank you, you are very kind."

Mr. Gray arose and took from the library a huge volume bound in calf and gravely approached his companion. The young girl, with a laugh dancing in her eyes, seated herself and held out two little white hands somewhat as she might had she been about to receive an infant.

Another five minutes passed. The young girl read a page and then her pretty face was momentarily distorted by a yawn. The productions of the Supreme Court evidently did not possess for her the charm of fiction. She lacked patience for this kind of a contest. Rising at last she dropped the volume on the table with a thump and confronted her silent companion.

"I guess I'll go," she said; "it's no use to stay."

"Mr. Shaw is not likely to return. Do you wish me to tell him who called?"

"Yes; if you will."

"Pardon me—your name?"

"My name?"

"If you wish me to tell Mr. Shaw who called."

"I am Miss Shaw."

Mr. Gray gravely bowed his thanks, wrote the name on a card and placed it on the rack.

"If you will remain a moment longer," he said, "I will call a carriage. It is late for you to appear in the streets alone."

"Thank you, sir. I am not the least afraid."

She gave him a freezing bow, emphasized with a look that would have transfixed a more vulnerable man, and disappeared.

## CHAPTER XII.

## MRS. SMITH AT HOME.

In good time the Wingdam stage bore Miss from the settlement of Smith's Pocket. The leave-takings of Miss were almost pathetic. Scores of bearded miners, who had known her from infancy, assembled at the stage office to see her off. The farewell injunctions of these gentlemen were characteristic.

"Keep a stiff upper lip, little one," said he of the blonde beard and Raphael-like countenance, whose encouragement at the school examination had led to such sensational results, "don't show the white feather, whatever else you may do."

Miss smiled and put up her face for the blonde beard to kiss.

"If your new mother don't do the right thing by you, write to some of us," whispered another. "We'll straighten the kinks out of her if you say the word."

"Thank you," replied Miss, subdued to politeness by these expressions of friendship, "I will."

"You'll find lots of Clyties down there," said a third, "but don't give in to the best of them. You're worth a heap of them bleached things."

Miss thanked him, also, and began a hurried hand-shaking all around. Clytie, looking exceedingly sweet and pretty, came up at last and threw her arms around Miss's neck.

"We haven't always been very good friends," murmured the gentle girl, "but I love you."

Quick and passionate in love as in hate. Miss folded her once hated Clytie to her heart. The latter protracted this embrace, perhaps not entirely unconscious of the effect the tableau might produce upon the masculine witnesses.

Mrs. Smith stood a little apart, a smiling spectator of this scene. The white eyelids drooped lower than usual over her dark and brilliant eyes, and a tender expression softened the rigid outlines of her mouth. Her face was cool and colorless, and to the casual observer she seemed a fond mother, regarding with a fond mother's complacency these manifestations of friendship bestowed upon her daughter. But there were observant eyes upon her, and these were reminded of a good-natured cat, finding amusement in the antics of a captive mouse, whose hour of immolation had not yet arrived.

The driver cut short these leave-takings with a gruff "All aboard!" and Miss and her mother hurried into the stage. Jehu leisurely mounted his box, gathered the reins in his gloved hands in the most improved style of the art, nodded to the stable boy who restrained the impatient

couriers, and dashed off at a rattling pace, enveloped in a cloud of red dust.

The trained animals continued their animated gait until the settlement was lost to view; then, with a unanimity of mind gained by long practice in deceit, subsided into a sober trot.

Thrice in the ascent, the stage, winding round the brows of hills, came to a full view of the settlement, and each time Miss, looking from the window, could see promiscuous waving of hats, amid which she could distinguish the snow-white handkerchief of her quondam enemy and present friend—the correct Clytie. As the inexorable driver made the last turn in the zig-zag road, and the settlement of Smith's Pocket glided from view, the child sank back in her seat, and cried as if her heart was breaking. The defiant nature that was proof against rebuffs and taunts, which somewhat too readily gave course for course and blow for blow, was purged of its fierce hardness by the sunshine of love.

Mrs. Smith reclined in her corner and surveyed with half-closed eyes the quivering form of her daughter. The placid smile, in which the observant eyes of the miners had detected a latent menace, still hovered on her red lips, but its expression was less carefully concealed. For some reason the woman hated the child.

The driver was in a fearful temper that day. The box-passenger, a frequent traveler on that route, marked it as one of Bill Green's black days. The harmony that usually existed between this accomplished Jehu and his horses was destroyed. The lash that ordinarily hummed a harmless threat over their heads, now fell against sides and limbs, raising great welts, of which, at another time, Bill would have been more conscience-stricken than if it had fallen in his line of duty to slay a regiment of men.

Equine nature has in it a touch of the human. Its philosophy is not unlike ours. With them, as with us, patience in time ceases to be a virtue. Bill Green's trained team was no exception to this rule. Fretted by sundry angry twoblings for which they could discover no cause, and smarting from the sharp cuts which they deemed undeserved, they held a rapid consultation. A favorable spot was selected to carry their resolves into practice. The signs were visible in a vicious laying back of eight ears, a warning whin of four tails, and like a flash they were off. Down a long incline the stage rolled on its wheels, the horses leaping as if actuated by a fell determination to cut a connection that had ceased to be pleasant or honorable, a hatless driver pulling madly and impatiently at the reins, and frightened passengers screaming at the top of their voices. On, on they flew. The

red dust rose and formed a dense slanting column in the rear. The rays of the June sun falling serenely upon this slanting column, gave it the appearance of a rising volume of fire. Past mining claims, where men stood speechless, too distant to render assistance; past farm-houses, where tow-headed children gathered in the doorway, cured for the time of all desire for a stage ride, and adding to the general tumult with their cries; past vehicles whose drivers took care not to claim the legal right to half the highway; past weary pedestrians rendered suddenly contented with their laborious mode of progression—and still Bill Green kept his seat on the box, no longer striving to suppress a rebellion that had assumed such formidable proportions, but hoping yet to guide it to its own destruction.

The check came, like the rise, from an insignificant cause. A meek and gentle-eyed cow was lying by the roadside calmly chewing her cud, when the four bounding horses burst upon her astonished vision. The impetus fright added to her will brought her to her feet in much less time than she usually occupied in making that change of posture, and with a perversity not to be ascribed wholly to her sex, she started to cross the road. There was time, even for this ill-advised movement, if she had been a cow of any decision of character. But fairly turned in the middle of the road, the exploit seemed hazardous. She stopped, and probably resolved to retrace her steps. This hesitation was fatal. The leaders were upon her. They made a gallant effort to clear the unexpected obstacle to their progress, but the impetus from behind as they rose carried them along.

There was a confused mass of struggling animals, the agonized bellow of the irresolute cow rising from the din. The sudden stoppage of the stage pitched Bill Green upon the backs of his fallen rebels, where the box-passenger quickly joined him. The three inside male passengers alighted and quickly cut such portions of the harness as attached the horses to the stage. The driver, swearing terrifically, was extricated from his dangerous position, the horses were helped to their feet, and an account taken of damages. The horses were badly bruised, but no bones broken. The cow, crushed nearly to death, was speedily shot. The inside passengers were uninjured. Mrs. Smith looked very pale when lifted to the ground, but Miss was but little frightened. Her sympathies went to the cow, and after the cow was killed to the horses. She got water and washed the blood from their bruises with her white pocket-handkerchief, and when there were no more bruises to wash, she scolded them in a confidential tone for running

away. People soon began to come from all quarters. The Wingdam stage did not often indulge in such irregularities. It was a well-principled stage as a rule, and Bill Green was a careful driver. Some thought he must have taken a drop too much, and regretted the loss of public confidence that might be incurred thereby. Bill gave no explanation, but repaired damages as quickly as possible, and gave the order "All aboard!"

Mrs. Smith reached the city in good time without further adventure. The lady was waited for at the steamboat-landing by a man with whom she seemed well acquainted. Miss eyed this man narrowly, and decided in her own mind that she would not like him. He was not such a man as she expected to meet in the city. Her ideal of a city gentleman was Mr. Gray, and this man did not look in the least like Mr. Gray. He was short and stout, with a red face and large hands. His garments were ill-fitting, and the child, in her estimate of the tailor's abilities, did not make sufficient allowance for the difficulty to be overcome in fitting such a figure at all.

The man helped Mrs. Smith into a carriage, and would have lifted Miss in, but that agile young lady disdained his aid. She hopped in as a squirrel might, and throwing herself on a seat, turned and glared upon him a look of defiance.

"O, ho!" muttered the man, "my little heiress is too good to be touched, is she? We shall see, shan't we, Nellie?"

"Don't provoke the child," remonstrated Mrs. Smith, who did not seem in the least put out by being so familiarly addressed; "she has a temper of her own."

"Come honestly by it, I dare say. You are not quite an angel, Mrs. Smith," and he chuckled to himself, as if somewhere in his speech a joke was waiting popular appreciation.

Mrs. Smith rested quietly under the imputation of not being thoroughly angelic in all her moods, and Miss, disdaining to recognize the man's presence, looked silently from the carriage window as it passed slowly through the streets.

In some one of the wilderness of houses stretched out on either side was one man who was in her mind the embodiment of all that was good in this world. This man had been her first friend, was ever her dearest friend, and was now her only friend. She was too young and too inexperienced in the ways of the world to comprehend that the fortune she supposed she had inherited might, through the cupidity of others, endanger her life or liberty, but she

felt an instinctive longing for the presence of him who had always been her guide, her preceptor, and protector. But in this labyrinth of streets and wilderness of houses, how was he to find her? Had he been in the country, if the country was ever so large, she might search him out, but her knowledge of woodcraft would not avail her here.

The house to which Miss was taken did not correspond with her preconceived idea of her city home more than the man who persisted in being her companion corresponded with her idea of city men. It was larger and had more windows than the National Hotel at Smith's Pocket, but it was not clean nor nicely furnished. At the head of a broad stairway, covered with matting, a hall or passage ran the entire length of the house, and at intervals along this passage were doors which opened into rooms.

The arrival of Mrs. Smith was the signal for the occupants of several of these rooms to come forth to greet her. Three or four painted and over-dressed women kissed her with friendly ardor, and men in all sorts of semi-attire came and shook her hand. The first greeting over, Miss became the chief object of attention. At this period in Miss's life she had no well defined idea of policy. She had faults which at times became sufficiently prominent, but the practice of deception was not one. She never thought of concealing her likes or dislikes. Kindness won her quickly, but harshness could not bend her.

The people who now crowded around her inspired her with a disgust she took no pains to conceal. There were rough-visaged miners all around Smith's Pocket for whom she felt the sincerest affection, but on these men and women, better dressed and more genteel, she turned her back in disdain. Her quick perception enabled her to distinguish between genuine sympathy and the curiosity with which selfish people regard an object of interest.

To the friends of Mrs. Smith, Miss was an object of interest. They had heard something of her singular if not romantic history. They had heard that she had fallen heir to a handsome fortune, and knew that Mrs. Smith had gone up to Smith's Pocket to put in her claim to a widow's moiety, and to the guardianship of her daughter. That Mrs. Smith was in fact the widow of the late Mr. Smith and the mother of Miss, it did not occur to them to doubt. Mrs. Smith was perhaps thirty years of age, and some of them had known her three or four years. She might have been married and borne a child and not thought the circumstance of sufficient importance to justify mention to every-day friends. They all agreed that it was very fortunate she had not obtained a divorce, especially as the

trifling circumstance of not being divorced had not in the least restricted her freedom of action.

This little savage was the heiress. She had money enough in her own right to make her a fine lady. It was worth while to make friends with her. The boldest among them did not dare to pronounce her pretty, though all agreed she might become so with proper training. She had splendid eyes and teeth, and if she showed the latter too much the habit could not be ascribed to overweening vanity. She evidently had a more lively appreciation of the value of teeth as a means of defense than as a personal ornament.

A word may be necessary at this place to save the reader the trouble of disparaging conjecture in regard to the house in which Mrs. Smith had taken rooms. It was a respectable second-class lodging house. The occupants of the rooms were people of fair repute. Of twenty or more ladies in the house, three were divorced wives living on the alimony a credulous and good-natured court had allowed them from the property of cast-off husbands. Five were actresses holding themselves in readiness for an engagement. Four were musicians who played for a consideration two or three hours each evening in some place not advertised in respectable journals, the names of which the ladies themselves could never remember when asked where they were engaged. Five were ballet-girls, respectable, poor, prematurely old and hopelessly faded, and there were always three or four who lived no one knew how. All had male friends, but the degree of intimacy accorded these gentlemen was sacredly regarded as a matter between each lady and her own conscience.

The male occupants of rooms in this establishment were no higher in the social world than the ladies. Half of them were fourth-rate musicians, depending upon chance commands for professional services for a livelihood. Two had good situations in the orchestra of a regular theatre, and were regarded as men of means. There were two or three Bohemians, occasional writers for daily or weekly papers, gentlemen whose versatility of talent was such that they could burlesque a popular play or write a leader for a commercial daily. The distinguishing peculiarity of these gentlemen of the quill was the circumstance that they seemed to have been born two or three weeks too soon, and had always been in debt for the expenses incurred in consequence of this singular mistake.

There could be no community which held money in lighter esteem, and there was none which kept a brighter lookout for such stray coin as chanced within their reach. Their contempt for money was manifested by their haste

to get rid of it, and their appreciation of money was shown by their eagerness to get more. There was nothing in that establishment money could not buy, no service it would not command. It was a rare thing for one of them to retire at night with a dollar at their disposal or with a positive knowledge of the means for the next day's dinner. Yet they always dined. If one was impecunious, another had met with a little good luck. If, as often happened, a whole circle mourned an exhausted exchequer, one of the party would recall a friend on whom Fortune had recently smiled. When resources were at their lowest ebb, and the masculine heart was pierced with despair, the more fertile brain of some one of the ladies would devise measures by which the needed supplies were obtained.

Mrs. Smith, with her reported fortune, was a welcome comer in this establishment. She had tasted poverty herself, as some of them knew, and would hardly "go back" on her old friends. The lady justified their reasonable expectations. She loaned small sums without a murmur, and never hinted at repayment. She was always ready to send for beer, that darling solace of the decaying female's heart, and her table would always accommodate two or three guests. Thus while secretly preparing to change for quarters more in keeping with her altered circumstances, she made a friend of every person she met.

At first Miss was treated with great consideration. The ladies insisted upon taking her to their respective rooms, and bestowed upon her all sorts of pet names. The gentlemen who held money in such contempt, calculated that in two or three years she would be marriageable, and that a fortune, though encumbered with a wife, was better than no fortune at all. In time, however, both ladies and gentlemen ceased their attentions. The child was permitted to come and go as her own pleasure dictated. Mrs. Smith never troubled herself to know where she was or with whom. Often Miss would come in in the evening from a long ramble and go supperless to bed without a question being asked showing an interest in her welfare. The room used as a parlor was generally full of company when Mrs. Smith was at home, and was locked when she was away. Miss had her own little room, where she sat, night after night, reading or thinking. Her liberty, however, was sweet to her. Her old wandering habits returned. A growing consciousness of sex restrained her from making these long journeys of days and nights in which she had indulged at Smith's Pocket, but she rose with the sun and took long walks in every direction. Some days she would spend on the wharves, watching the ships discharge or take in their cargoes, and again she

would climb the hills to the south and west of the city, returning at night to renew her rambles the next day.

At first her chief thought was that she might meet Mr. Gray. She walked the main thoroughfares day after day, watching for each form as it appeared in the distance, but giving it no thought after she saw it was not the one she sought. Many passers became familiar with her sad, silent, but strangely interesting face, but to her all faces were as one that were not his. Hungry, patient little heart! How slowly she came to the sad conclusion that Mr. Gray had forgotten the pet pupil whom he had once drawn from sin and misery.

One day, weary and heartsick, Miss came home earlier than usual and went silently to her own room. She had scarcely closed the door when a familiar voice greeted her ear. It was the voice of the man she had known as Waters, the murderer of McNagley, the suspected murderer of her own father. She had once saved this man's life, when threatened by a mob, but she had not at that time knew how deeply he had injured her. Now this man was in apparently confidential conversation with her mother.

Miss had no scruples which restrained the impulses to put her ear to the key-hole of the door. Her ear was quick and she heard voices as distinctly as if she had been in the other room.

"How long is this fooling going to last?" asked Waters; "you know I run my neck into a noose every time I come to town."

"You must be patient, John," replied Mrs. Smith. "Things are working as well as we could wish. The child leads a wild, vagrant life, and her manifestations of temper have been witnessed by all the people in the house. In two or three months, at the most, it will be safe to make an application to the city authorities to have her placed under proper restraint."

"Which means," asked Waters, "the Industrial School."

"Or the Magdalen Asylum."

"She is too young for that."

"She is almost thirteen. Physicians will tell you it is no uncommon thing for girls of that age to deserve to be put there."

"But that won't do; Miss is not so bad in that way."

"Perhaps not yet. But I have asked for three months more."

"Well; do you look for a row? Has that fellow Gray turned up?"

"Mr. Gray seems to have forgotten us. I can find him when I want him, but Miss is not likely to meet him."

"There will be trouble if she should."

"I don't know. We will prove that the child leads a life that must inevitably result in her ruin. Mr. Gray, if ever so much disposed to be her friend, cannot prove that she does not."

"But he knows about the money."

"In three months the money will be safe."

"And then," said Waters, "how do I know you will not shake me?"

"You don't know," coolly replied the lady.

"Perhaps you think you can."

"I know I can."

"Seems to me you've been thinking it over?"

"I have been thinking it over."

"Well, what is your conclusion?"

"To be true to you."

The answer was followed by the sound of kisses. The conversation was resumed, but it was of an affectionate nature and did not interest the listener. She arose from her knees, shook her fist menacingly at the door, showing her rows of teeth many a belle would have given a fortune to possess.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### AMONG THE HOODLUMS.

Miss was too young to thoroughly comprehend the scheme of the woman she had been taught to accept as her mother. She understood, however, that her liberty was threatened. She understood that the theft of her little fortune was a part of the plot. She had read of the Magdalen Asylum as the place of refuge of bad and unfortunate women, and knew that a certain disgrace was attached to residents of such institutions; but she was not wise enough to understand the nature of the degradation embraced in Mrs. Smith's designs.

Through the night the little wail lay revolving in her mind plans of rescue. She was so ignorant and so utterly friendless that the danger assumed a threatening form. Betrayed by her mother, how could she resist the law when its force should be brought against her? What could a little girl do against so many powerful and experienced enemies? It was useless to wish that she had never been born. She was a fact, an unfortunate and unhappy fact, who had known little but suffering, but still a fact. She could not die because she wished to. She might kill herself, but that would be wicked; and what weighed more in her mind, it would please Mrs. Smith too well.

Flight seemed the only way of escape. Her

old habit of taking to the woods when things went wrong suggested this method of extricating herself from the grasp of her enemies. She might possibly find her way back to Smith's Pocket, where every man was her friend, though no one she had encountered in the city knew such a place as Smith's Pocket existed. There would be danger in going alone on board a steamboat, as she might be arrested and taken to jail as a vagrant. Still, flight in some way was the only means of escape that occurred to her. If Mr. Gray had not quite forgotten her, he might tell her what to do. At this point in her reflections her stout little heart succumbed, and she began to weep—weep silently, without hope and without relief.

When she arose in the morning Mr. Waters had disappeared. Mrs. Smith was alone. She seemed as coldly placid as ever. She only vouchsafed a look at Miss when she saw her dark face and gleaming eyes before her.

"I want some money," said Miss, simply.

Mrs. Smith deliberately took her purse from her pocket, opened it, and took out two half dollars, which she handed to Miss without a word.

"That is not enough. I want twenty dollars."

The lady opened her eyes at this demand. The magnitude of the sum startled her into a reply.

"Twenty dollars! What do you want with so much money?"

"No matter. I want it."

The pale lips of the child compressed over her white teeth in a way that denoted a storm if her demand was not complied with. Mrs. Smith understood that Miss had some project in view, and reflected that this twenty dollars might be the means of accomplishing it. After a moment, therefore, she took four five dollar pieces from her purse and gave them to Miss.

The remainder of the day Miss sat in her room. She wrote five letters to Mr. Gray and tore them up, one after the other. When the last one lay in shreds at her feet, her head sank upon the table and her fragile form shook with mingled emotions of wounded pride and grief. It seemed so unkind in him to forget her when he was the only friend she had.

The next morning, long before the other lodgers were astir, Miss crept stealthily along the shadowy passage, descended the broad stairs and gained the street. The city was still wrapped in sleep. Now and then a wagon rattled harshly over the stone pavement, and a few early pedestrians were abroad. Here and there were curling volumes of smoke issuing from chimneys high

up the sky, and still more rarely open shutters disclosed faces at the windows.

The controlling idea of Mliss was to get out of the city. In the country they had no industrial schools, no Magdalen Asylum, no such heartless men as Mr. Gray.

As she trudged along the genial sunlight of a glorious morning made her way more pleasant. She met men who looked like working men, and blithe, handsome sewing-girls going to the scene of their daily labors. Children were playing on the sidewalk, and sometimes, through mere craving for human sympathy, she would stop and join in their sports. She had no fear of being followed. Oftener than otherwise she was gone the entire day, and no one asked where she had been. Her ultimate destination was Smith's Pocket. She thought it must be about two hundred miles away. She remembered passing through Stoeaton on the way to the city, and reasoned, not without sense that, in that city she might find some one who had heard of the famous Red Mountain, in which so many men were seeking their fortunes.

The high ridge lying to the west of Bay View seemed to offer a favorable point of observation. From the highest point in the ridge the waters of the ocean and the bay could be plainly seen, and on a clear day the outlines of the Sierra Nevada loomed up dark and grand. Perhaps her Indian's eye might recognize the locality she desired to find. The young traveler idled away so much time that it was nearly noon when she reached the spot from which a part of the city was still visible. The sea-breeze came fresh from the ocean, and there was a power in its motion that almost took her off her feet. But it was brave fun to face it, and its freshness was so invigorating that she forgot her cares and gambled along like a child at play. Thus occupied, happy for a time because she forgot herself, she was startled by the voice of some one calling:

"I say, sis, what are you doing up there?"

Mliss turned and beheld, at a little distance down the hill, the figure of a young man. He was dressed in coarse but well-fitting garments, out in a style that indicated a residence in the city.

Mliss returned no answer. She was old enough to feel shy of meeting the other sex so far from human habitation. There were houses in sight, but the place was lonely, and perhaps for the first time in her life she felt afraid.

The young fellow approached. It was useless to run, so Mliss faced him with a look of defiance.

"What's the matter, little one? Have you run away?"

"No," replied Mliss.

"Looks like it. Who's here with yer?"

"Nobody."

"That's odd. Like being alone?"

"Yes."

"Queer taste—for a girl. Most of them run in droves."

There was nothing sinister or menacing in the young man's regard, and Mliss soon recovered her usual composure. He was a rather good looking young man of nineteen or twenty, and he had a frank, winning smile, in keeping with his free, off-hand manner.

"See you from down yonder," the young man continued, after a pause, "and thought I'd come and see if you was lost."

"I'm all right," responded Mliss.

"Where yer going?"

Silence on Mliss's part.

"What yer doing?"

More silence.

"Won't talk, eh? Needn't be so uppish."

"Go away, please."

"Couldn't think of it. Wouldn't be right. Some feller worse than I'll come and run off with ye."

"No, there won't," replied Mliss, showing her teeth.

"Little savage, eh. Don't like the fellers?"

"No."

"Rather young yet. Come to yer bimeby. Where do you live?"

"In San Francisco."

"What street?"

"Kearny."

"Number?"

"Don't know."

"That's a go. Don't know where yer live. G't a pop?"

"What's that?"

"A poppy, governor, daddy. You know what I mean."

"No."

"Look nice. Got on pretty good clothes. What's your name?"

"Lissy Smith."

"Lissy Smith. Good name to travel on. Lots of Lissy Smiths."

"Well," said Mliss, "I am going. Goodby."

"I'm going too. Won't be shook."

The young fellow walked a few yards by her side. Mliss stopped.

"I don't want you to go with me," she said.

"Suppose, then, you come with me. There's lots of fellers and girls down yonder and they'll give you welcome."

At this moment two or three rather pretty young girls appeared coming up the hill, doubt-

less in search of their truant escort. They were chatting and laughing, and to the lonely Mliss seemed very happy. She paused involuntarily and waited their approach.

The young man with his easy, jaunting air, advanced to meet them.

"Com', girls," he said, "here's the little runaway. She one of us. Miss Lissy Smith," he continued, assuming a formal manner, "permit me to present to you two of my dearst friends, Miss Hattie Brooks and Miss Lou Chambers. Now girls, you know each other. If you don't pick in and have a good time I'll trounce the lot of you."

The girls laughed and greeted Mliss cordially.

"It's his way," said one of them, thinking the threat might require some explanation, "but he's a dear good fellow. We all love him."

Mliss warmed at once to these free-spoken, open-hearted girls. It was a new and pleasant experience.

"We were out here picnicking," said Miss Hattie Brooks, "and we saw you dancing on the hill. You did not look much larger than a grasshopper, and we all thought of Miss Kingsbury's Fanchon. Have you seen Miss Kingsbury's Fanchon?"

"No; I have never been in a theatre in my life."

"Never been in a theatre in your life. How I envy you. You've got something to live for."

Mliss laughed.

"Is it nice?" she asked.

"Nice is no name for it. Some night you shall go with me and Bob."

"Who is Bob?"

"My sweetness. Didn't he tell you his name?"

"No."

"Well, his name is Robert Shaw. His father is a great lawyer. His mother and sister are what you call fine ladies, but Bob is—well, they call us all boodlums."

An idea flashed into Mliss's head.

"His father is a lawyer, did you say?"

"Yes, and a big gun at that. You should see the house they live in. Bob don't stay at home much, but he drops down on them once in a while just to rouse them up. His sister is awful pretty, but she's a high stepper. She won't look at one of us. You should have seen her one day when Bob introduced me. Such airs as she put on. But Bob laughed and so did I."

"I think," said Mliss, thoughtfully, "I would like to see his father, that is, if he is not too grand."

"O, he's nice. He likes fun, too, though he's fifty. Such a handsome man, too. But what do

you want with him?"

"I want," said Mliss, gravely, "I want to find a lawyer—one that won't steal."

"Well, that is not so easy. But Mr. Shaw won't steal from a little girl like you. He's above that sort of thing. But tell us, has anybody done anything to you?"

"No," replied Mliss; "but I've got some money a d can't get it."

The form of expression still adopted by Mliss would not always bear critical analysis, but it was intelligible to her new friends. They plied her with a thousand questions, and at last arrived at something like the truth.

"My eyes, what a romance! And you are just as nice as you can be, as if nothing out of the way had happened. An heiress! A wronged heiress! What a title for a novel! Bob! Bob!"

The young lady danced off, and soon came back with the handsome Bob, a willing captive.

Mliss repeated the outlines of her story. She told how she had fallen heir to a rich claim in Red Mountain, how a woman had appeared at that time and represented herself as her father's widow, how they had left Red Mountain where she had friends, and come to San Francisco where she knew no one, and how the woman now proposed to have her sent to the Industrial School.

"Don't worry, little one," said Bob, patronizingly, after he had duly weighed the statement, "I'll see you through. We'll have the old woman indicted for—"

It did not occur to him at that moment what charges to bring against the woman, so rather than disappoint his hearers, who had great confidence in his legal opinion, he added:

"Being a swindler. That'll cover the whole ground."

Mliss thought the term appropriate. Miss Nellie was so well pleased with the manner in which her "sweetness" had responded, that she put up her rosy lips before all the company for a kiss. The young man, however, did not seem in the least overcome by this demonstration, but proceeded deliberately to cull the proffered sweets.

"Now, Miss Smith," said Miss Chambers, who watched this proceeding with jealous eyes, "you must go with us to the camp and see the rest of us."

Mliss complied. She had suddenly given up for a time her projected trip to Red Mountain. The hearty welcome of her new friends made her feel at home, and she reflected that if nothing came of her consultation with the lawyer, Smith's Pocket was a refuge always available.

The "camp" was a large tent in a sheltered spot between two hills, on the Bay side of the



ridge, and was evidently a place of frequent resort. The turf in front of the tent had the appearance of being used as a play-ground, and various cooking utensils suggested that the jolly picnickers were not unmindful of the requirements of nature. In fact, when they arrived at the camp, some eight or ten young ladies were busy preparing lunch. An equal number of well-grown boys from sixteen to twenty years of age were lounging about, some lying at full length on the turf, others teasing the girls, or pretending to help, as the case might be.

Miss Hattie Brooks took Miss in her especial charge. It seemed proper that she should do so, as she had at that time the enviable position of chief favorite of the President of the Free and Easy Social Club, which honorable office had been held since the first organization of the club by Mr. Robert Shaw. It seemed proper also, in view of the fact that the said Mr. Robert Shaw was going to "see Miss through," whatever that might mean.

The son of the great lawyer was not only president of the Free and Easy Club, but a personage of great importance among the class of which this club was a representation. The social position which was his by virtue of his family added, doubtless, to his prestige, but his personal traits of character were such as to insure popularity on his own merits. He possessed a fresh, ruddy, boyish countenance which pleased the girls, and his inexhaustible animal spirit was the life and soul of the company. He was also reputed to be the best fighter, and never gave in whether whipped or not. His pluck had given him such a reputation that such of his associates as were really physically his superior were disinclined to a trial of skill and endurance. A combat with him in any form was a serious matter, since he could never be made to acknowledge when he was fairly whipped. And then he enjoyed a fight for its own sake. His readiness in this respect inspired his associates with a profound regard for whatever opinion he might advance, or whatever position he might assume. He was, without doubt, the best-natured lad in the club. He bore no ill will to those who disouted with him. He would simply thrash them until they cried "enough," and be as good friends as ever. His enmity was reserved for those who would not fight when, in his opinion, it was their duty to do so. Physical law was the only law he recognized. He was a bully from instinct. His favorite pastime was to win the affections of an associate's girl, holding himself morally acquitted if he offered the aggrieved party a chance to win her back in a fair fight. Nothing in his estimation could be fairer than this. His qualities were too quickly accepted by the young ladies of his circle. Not one could be found, however devoted to another admirer, to resist his advances. The distinction of being sought and won by one so abundantly able to maintain his right to her affections was a triumph none could forego. His attentions brought a young lady into the front rank at once. The

place of favorite was, therefore, difficult to maintain. Many had gained it. There was always a score striving to supplant the favorite. His associates realized that they held their places in the affections of the young ladies who accepted their attentions only on sufferance. Their chief had only to throw his handkerchief and scores would fly to pick it up.

The young man wore his honors with a tolerable grace. He sometimes abused his power, and what mortal does not. He was always ready, however, to give ample satisfaction. He claimed no privileges of rank. "If you don't like me," he would say, "just say so. It won't take long to settle the little affair." Very often the party thus challenged would feel himself compelled to accept the issue, though pretty certain to come out second best. But it was better to be soundly whipped than to be jeered at for showing the white feather. Should he adopt the latter course the girls would turn him the cold shoulder. If he took the whipping like a man, enough would be found to solace him with their smiles.

The one trouble which neither the genius nor the power of the President of the Free and Easy Social Club could overcome, was a scarcity of funds. But few of its members had any steady occupation. Several, like Bob Shaw, had good homes to go to, but their fathers were chary of their coin. The girls had homes of some sort, and could generally provide provisions for a picnic, but their cash resources were limited. So severe was the pressure of the money market at times that car-tickets for their excursions were the subject of serious consideration for the whole club. It may be imagined, therefore, that the advent of a little girl, who was entitled to a fortune in her own right, was hailed with delight. There was not a mercenary heart in the club, but means of enjoyment were essential. Work was voted a slow and depressing way of getting money. They could not work and play at the same time, and play was so pleasant that they could not lose time in work. Their wits were ever exercised to raise means for enjoyment without descending to tedious toil. In this case, the means seemed to be thrown in their way.

Mr. Robert Shaw was too clever to impart the information he had gained to his associates. He would share with them the spoils, but not the honor of supplying them. The time had been when he could draw upon his father, but of late money had been less plentiful at home than formerly, and his supplies were inconveniently cut off. Something had turned up at last. He contemplated no wrong to his charge, but if through his influence her fortune was restored to her, she could not be otherwise than generous.

"Mum's the word," he had whispered to the girls, and his command had such weight with them that they even re-trained their propensity to gossip. Miss was kept between the two while preparations went on for lunch.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## GOING HOME.

A rapid glance at the table, improvised by the means of narrow boards taken surreptitiously from a neighboring fence, revealed the fact that the lunch was deficient in one important respect. They had no beer. A pitcher of that innocuous ale brewed in the mysterious recesses of Nature's laboratory offered a tempting draught to a really thirsty throat, but among these choice spirits this beverage was held in light esteem.

"Boys," said the president, flinging upon the table a look of withering contempt, "has the Free and Easy Social Club come to this? Is the ancient spirit of the club so far extinguished that the difficulty of procuring a keg of beer cannot be overcome? Where is the chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means?"

A red, freckled face, wearing at that time a somewhat apprehensive look, rose from the crowd, and a voice said, "Here."

"Here," repeated the president, severely; "listen, ladies and gentlemen; Mr. Richard Andrews will give an account of himself."

There was a general laugh at the expense of the chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means. The pleasantry of the president was highly applauded, for he it known, that Mr. Richard Andrews was so generally known as "Red-Headed Dick," that at first his right to the more substantial name with which he was addressed was not recognized.

"Beg leave to report," responded the chairman, attempting to imitate the dignity that characterized the president's address, "that the resources of the Free and Easy Club are exhausted."

The president was not in the least mollified by this reply. He waved his hand majestically and said:

"Mr. Richard Andrews, your report is not accepted. You simply state a fact, whereas it is your duty, as chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means, to overcome any fact which may be detrimental to the well-being and honor of the club. In the present instance it is clearly your duty to provide a keg of beer."

The club applauded—Mr. Richard Andrews alone remained silent. He saw that affairs were taking such a course that he might have no honorable alternative but to engage in a fictitious encounter with the president. He was no coward, but he had been easily whipped by that distinguished gentleman so frequently that the element of chance essential to the thorough enjoyment of such combats was wanting in the present instance.

After the applause had subsided, the president waited a moment for Mr. Andrews to speak, but as that gentleman preferred not to make an issue which was certain to result disastrously to himself, the former continued:

"Just over the hill there lives a worthy Dutchman who makes an honest livelihood by selling beer to his neighbors. Now, for the time being, we are his neighbors."

"The Dutchman sells beer for cash," responded the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, planting himself upon what in another body of men would have constituted an impregnable line of defense, "Where is the cash to come from?"

"Where is the cash to come from?" thundered the president. "Gentlemen, do you hear? Why, any fool can get beer with cash; the point is to get beer without cash."

There was a wild shout at the unfortunate chairman's expense. Even Mr. Andrews's young lady, on whom he had squandered his income for the previous month, joined in the laugh against him.

To Miss this scene was painful to a degree. She was not accustomed to the deliberate "chaffing" which constituted a leading feature in the amusements of the club, and her active sympathies always went with the weaker party. A like impulse to that which had prompted her to set Waters free, when at bay against a mob now moved her to extricate the crushed chairman from his ridiculous position. During the discussion her fingers had played nervously with one of the four five-dollar pieces which she had provided for her intended journey, and now, forgetting everything but the fact that she had the means of relief in her power, she darted forward and laid the coin on the table before the object of her sympathy.

The humble Miss was back in her seat before the company were aware of what she had done. Andrews held the coin triumphantly above his head, and the girls crowded round to see if it was really gold. Satisfied on this point, Miss became the object of curiosity and attention. Such munificence was unheard of. Who was the little dark stranger who scattered her gold so freely?

The president, though cheated of the fascinating amusement of "chaffing" his subordinate, graciously approved of the conduct of the daring Miss. To what extent his complacency was influenced by the trifling fact that the club would be liberally supplied with beer, we need not inquire. Man is but man, and Robert Shaw made no pretensions to moral superiority.

The beer was brought. For once a commercial transaction between the beer-selling Dutchman and the members of the Free and Easy So-

cial Club was conducted on a basis satisfactory to the former. The occurrence was one of such marked moment that the Teutonic gentleman sat meditatively in his bar-room the remainder of the afternoon. The explanation was quite beyond his power of divination, and it was not until he had tested the genuineness of the coin by all the processes known to the uninitiated that he gave full credence to his good fortune. Accepting the fact at last as one of the mysterious dispensations of Providence it was not given to man to understand, he drank an extra glass of his own beer and placidly dropped to sleep.

The scene had excited the picnickers to an unusual degree of hilarity. The beer which flowed so freely added to the boisterousness of their gaiety. Miss, favorably impressed at first, began to doubt if her new friends represented the first circles of society. The young ladies drank more beer than was consistent with her preconceived ideas of social propriety. Her old model, the correct Clytie, rose up in contrast to the free deportment of these city ladies, and Clytie lost nothing of Miss's good opinion thereby. Clytie's gentle forwardness with the master had seemed to Miss peculiarly exasperating; but Miss was too just in her estimate of her enemies to believe for one moment that Clytie would have permitted such familiarities as she now witnessed, had the master been so depraved as to offer them.

Night came, and with it the question of returning to their respective abodes. Night had fairly come, and the question was still unsettled. The young couples who had been together all day had still a great deal to say to each other. The still immature mind of Miss could not comprehend what topic presented such a wide and fertile field for discussion. A peculiarity of the discussions going on all around her was a tendency developed in each couple to hold a private conference. Each couple seemed suddenly inspired with a distrust of all other couples. It could be no ordinary topic which engrossed their attention, for the gentlemen spoke earnestly and the ladies responded seriously. It was, however, an exceedingly friendly discussion. If the lady did not always quite agree with the views advanced by the gentleman she combated them in the most amiable manner. If her fixed ideas of right and wrong compelled her to reject any propositions to arrive at a better understanding she coached her refusal in such tender terms that the swain could but be charmed though he were not gratified.

Three hours of night had passed when the last of the stragglers returned to camp, and the party prepared in earnest to go home. Miss remained the especial charge of Miss Brooks, and

it was arranged that she should be that young lady's guest for the night. The following day, at an hour to be agreed upon, Mr. Robert Shaw was to call and escort Miss to the offices of his illustrious father.

It was nearly eleven when the party left the street-car to seek their respective homes. Mr. Shaw escorted Miss Brooks to her somewhat distant abode. Miss followed, a little in the rear, for the disposition to privacy she had observed earlier in the evening suggested that her presence might be a restraint. Her faith in her new friends was somewhat shaken. She liked Bob Shaw less than she had been disposed to at first, when he so promptly espoused her cause against her mother. Her heart, so long closed to human sympathy, opened at the genial welcome given by the young ladies, but their lightness of conduct jarred upon her awakening sensibilities. She was afraid she had been betrayed into company that would not improve her case should Mrs. Smith carry out her threat of having her arrested for leading a wild and vagrant life. Her ideas of what was socially proper were undefined, but she felt certain Mr. Gray would not approve of her present associates. Little woman as she was, Mr. Gray's opinion was her standard of right and wrong.

At the door of Miss Brooks's residence Mr. Shaw lingered some moments, and then kissed that young lady good night. He caught Miss and would have kissed her also, but she drew fiercely back, and her parted lips showed her wicked white teeth. Not accustomed to rebuffs of this nature he sought to overcome her resistance by force, but she slipped from his grasp, dashed down the steps, and was lost in the darkness.

The young man uttered a profane ejaculation and started in pursuit. At first he heard the rapid patter of little feet in the distance, but this sound was soon lost. The gas had been turned off the street lamps in deference to the calendar of the year which announced the rise of the moon about that hour. The stars twinkled brightly overhead but shed no light on the little figure flying from a danger she could but vaguely comprehend.

Robert stopped at last, convinced of the hopelessness of pursuit. "Little idiot!" he muttered, "does she think I would harm her," and retraced his steps to the door, where Miss Brooks was waiting the result of his pursuit.

The young lady would perhaps have chided him severely if she had felt safe in so doing. But her hold on him was not very firm and she realized the fact. She loved him in her light way, but was too accustomed to his little irregularities to feel very bad about so trifling a one as this.

Proceeding along the darker side of the street—if one side were darker than the other—Miss gradually left the city behind her. Her habits of observation, which had been formed in her wild wanderings in Red Mountain, enabled her to direct her steps to the sand hills west of the city, where she prepared to pass the night. A warm shawl protected her in a measure from the chill night air, and as she passed the thickly inhabited portions of the city, her fears of arrest gradually died away. Arrived at a locality sufficiently lonely, she left the street, climbed over a hill, which she regarded as a kind of fortification against the enemy, penetrated to the centre of a cluster of low-hanging bushes, and there, without a thought of fear, but rather with a sensation of relief, sank down upon the soft warm sand and soon was lost in sleep.

It was broad daylight when she awoke. Her first sensation was that of hunger. Her old enemy had taken advantage of her unprotected situation, and attacked her during the night. This attack, however, was not formidable, since means of defense were at hand. Fifteen dollars of her little store still remained, and a half hour's walk would bring her to a bakery where she could feast to her heart's content.

Carefully reconnoitering, so as not to come upon any straggler, she gained the road and directed her steps to the city. A little reflection dissipated the burbear of arrest which had haunted her the night before. She beheld herself a very presentable young girl, comfortably dressed, and old enough to be abroad by herself. No one seeing her would suspect that she was homeless or doubt that she was under proper guardianship.

A half hour's walk brought her to a portion of the city with which she was tolerably familiar. In her wanderings she had often purchased cakes of a bakery kept by a kindly German woman, and thither she now directed her steps. The German lady had a pleasant word for every one who entered, and asked only such questions as any one might answer. She welcomed Miss with a genial "Good morning," and readily supplied her wants.

The idea of consulting a lawyer had seized firmly hold of the young girl's mind. There was no reason why she should select Mr. Shaw in preference to another, except she heard that he was an elderly gentleman, distinguished in his profession, who was above the meanness of stealing from a little girl like herself. The fact of his being an elderly man and the father of a family was much in his favor. She ventured, therefore, to ask the German lady if she could give her the address of Mr. Shaw, the great lawyer.

The German lady did not know the address of Mr. Shaw, but she knew there was a City Directory in which the names of all the lawyers were given, with their respective offices and residences. She had no directory herself, but she would go with her young friend to the corner grocery where they had one, and help her find the name she wanted.

Aided by the experience of the German lady Miss had no trouble in finding Mr. Shaw's address. The grocery man kindly wrote the name and address on a piece of paper which he gave to Miss.

The young girl thanked him, paid for her breakfast, and returned to her retreat in the sand hills to give the question the serious consideration which its importance demanded.

## CHAPTER XV.

TIM IS PERPLEXED.

Mr. Gray had sufficient meanness in his nature to experience a little pleasure in having rebuffed the handsome daughter of his principal. He had what he deemed sufficient reason for his conduct. During six months, when a word or smile from her would have been to his heart as dew to a famishing plant, Miss Shaw had ignored his existence. On three different occasions he had dined at Mr. Shaw's table, and on each occasion Miss Shaw had been absent. Whether her absence was the result of accident or design he had no means of knowing, but he suspected the latter. He recalled the circumstance that Miss Shaw had been somewhat vigorously and persistently courted by his predecessor, and he reasoned that the young lady possibly experienced an apprehension that such a tendency might be transmitted as one of the privileges of the position. He had resolved, therefore, to free her mind from such fear, should occasion offer.

Without more vanity than exists in the nature of most men, Mr. Gray realized the nature of the service he had rendered Mr. Shaw. He found that gentleman with a ruined practice, and in six months he had placed him again on his feet, at least in a professional point of view. Old clients were coming back, and new ones were not few in number or small in importance. He knew also that Mr. Shaw's professional income and his credit were his only means of support, and the one Mr. Gray had greatly augmented while preserving the other. Miss Shaw probably did not know that she was indirectly indebted to him for the luxuries she enjoyed.



but such was the fact. The knowledge added to the sense of injustice which Mr. Gray experienced.

Miss Shaw returned from that interview wounded and indignant. She returned also with a fixed purpose to bring the audacious young man to her feet. If she could have solaced herself with the reflection that Mr. Gray was a poor, able in his profession, perhaps, but destitute of wit or capacity to appreciate beauty or grace, she would have permitted him to pass from her thoughts. But one glance at his fine, thoughtful face, one glimpse into the tender depths of his calm, blue eyes convinced her that he was a man of more than ordinary sensibility, a man of culture, poetic feeling, and exalted imagination.

With this conviction came another conviction that the first advances to acquaintance came from her. The everlasting hills might mould and crumble and be swept into the sea, but not one jot from his course would that man swerve. Had she been older or less accustomed to success in the affairs of the heart, she would have hesitated before resolving to provoke a contest with such a man; but her confidence in her power to fascinate had not yet been impaired. Not quite nineteen, with the experience of three years in society, her memory already stored with some brilliant triumphs, she regarded men as her natural subjects. To find one less easy to bend than another was but to add zest to the play.

Miss Shaw returned home in high spirits. She had found something to do which was congenial to her nature. A man, when incensed, feels of his muscles or examines his pistol, and proceeds to pound or shoot, as his education may determine. A woman's tactics are different. If her antagonist is a man she flies to her looking-glass. The image there reflected is her weapon. Through his senses she will penetrate to the soul, and lay him at her feet. No woman of tact aims her shaft at the brain. The senses which a poor man possesses in common with the brutes are her point of attack. The sensual as well as the artistic eye loves beauty, and that she unravels before him. His imagination revels in visions of grace, and these visions she can modify.

Miss Shaw's mirror did not dissuade her from the revenge she contemplated. The Blue Grass region of Kentucky is still famous for the beauty of its women, and the speed of its horses. Both are distinct types of these species. The Blue Grass girl may be tall or short, dark or fair, but she has always fine eyes, chiseled features, and a dazzling complexion. She is proud as Cooper's ideal Indian, but tender and graceful as a fawn.

The blood of the race concentrates in the woman. Pure from instinct rather than calculation, holding life as nothing compared to honor, brilliant in fancy rather than profound in thought, sometimes bold in attack but ever shy of being caught, they are the hardest of women to win, the most faithful and devoted when won.

Miss Regina Shaw was a girl of this type. She was brilliant looking rather than strictly beautiful. Her face was warm with color, such tints as painters despair of reproducing. The blood seemed to play in her cheeks as if from love of the effect it produced. Her full, mobile, scarlet lips were soft and moist, and exasperatingly tempting. Her eyes were dark hazel, shaded with long black lashes, and as full of mischief as eyes of woman ever were. Hardly up to average height of her sex, her form was at once round, full, and slender—wide shoulders, full bust, and slender waist, and such hands and feet as girls of the Blue Grass region always have.

Four days after the interview between Miss Shaw and Mr. Gray already recorded, the latter was sitting in his private office. The active business of the day was over. The young lawyer was experiencing the pleasure of his first decided professional success. The case to which allusion has been made, was won. Mr. Shaw had presented it in court, but Mr. Shaw was above the petty meanness of taking credit for labor another had performed. To his clients and his professional brethren he acknowledged that success was due to the masterly manner in which the case had been prepared. In private Mr. Shaw rather embarrassed his young associate by the warmth of his praise.

"You are already the brains of the firm," said the elder gentleman, "and soon you will be able to go alone."

"The firm will be Shaw & Co. while you live," responded Mr. Gray, with some feeling. "Without your aid I might have struggled in the lower ranks for years."

"True; but few men in these days care to carry a useless burden."

"Don't speak of burden, Mr. Shaw. I owe you everything in the past, and you can afford to owe me something in the future. At all events, nothing can ever change our business relations—not even your own will."

A deeper red than usual overspread the gray-haired lawyer's features, and he silently grasped the young man's hand. Soon after, he returned to his private office.

Mr. Gray's thoughts that afternoon were pleasant. To borrow his own expression, he was out of the woods. A singular combination of

circumstances had enabled him to accomplish in a few months what other men are content to accomplish in as many years. Wealth and fame were before him. The doors of society would open at his knock. Love, the secret desire of every young heart, might come as the chief of blessings.

His reverie was disturbed by the entrance of Tim, the office-boy. The young rascal was grinning from ear to ear.

"Such an odd customer," he said; "shall I send him away?"

"Send who away?"

"A little girl that wants to see Mr. Shaw."

"Bring her in. I will represent Mr. Shaw."

"But she won't come in. It seems," added the facetious lad, again breaking into a laugh, "that she don't like young men."

"Have you been teasing her, you scamp?"

"No; she teased me. Told her that Mr. Shaw was not in, but another gentleman was in that would take Mr. Shaw's place. Then she asked if that other gentleman was an old man. Told her he was a young man. Said he wouldn't do; wanted an old man."

"Where is she now?"

"Outside, in the hall."

Mr. Gray arose to go in search of the girl. He thought, perhaps, that his personal appearance might overcome any prejudice she had conceived against young men as a class. He laid his cigar on the mantel, lest this evidence of dissipation should excite her suspicion, and as he turned he caught a glimpse of a brown dress extending slowly into the aperture, then a brown hand laid cautiously on the edge of the door, then the side of a dark face, and a bright black eye peering around just above the hand.

Mr. Gray paused, involuntarily. For a second his mind hovered on the verge of a delightful surprise. He was again about to advance when the door was thrown violently open, and a brown figure with black, streaming hair leaped forward, and threw itself upon his breast.

"Whew!" exclaimed Tim, stealing out as if in fear that his turn might come next, "isn't she a young thunder gust. After all that talk about not liking young men, to go at one in that style," and the youth, despairing of giving full expression to his feelings in the ordinary way, turned a neat hand-spring, a ter which he performed sundry feats of balancing, more curious to witness than to describe.

While going through with these little exhibitions of skill in the gymnastic art it suddenly occurred to the lively youth that an interview commenced after the fashion he had witnessed

would not end in a hurry, and that while it lasted he was virtually his own master. It occurred to him also that he wanted to hold a consultation with a boy in a neighboring office as to the possibility of a visit to the theatre that night. So Tim stole away without asking leave of absence.

Neither Mr. Gray nor Miss remarked his absence. For once the child was so overcome by the violence of her emotions as to fall into a convulsion verging upon hysterics. The master as she still called him, held her to his board and kissed her again and again, and Miss, forgetting that she was almost thirteen, forgetting also that she had an antipathy to young men, allowed herself to be placed upon his knee, and her head to be held against his breast. It was such delicious rest to feel once more around her the arm of a beloved friend, that she would rather have endured over again the heart hunger of the last six months than have lost the least of those tender caresses.

While this scene was being enacted an elegantly-dressed young lady swept up the stairs leading to Mr. Shaw's office, and entered the reception-room without knocking. The room, as the reader knows, was vacant. The agile Tim had deserted his post. The lady saw that the door to Mr. Gray's office was partly opened, and she thought, perhaps, that she would give that gentleman a pleasant surprise. So, with a half smile on her lips, she advanced to the door, tapped lightly, and pushed it open. The smile quickly gave place to a look of consternation. She stood transfixed as she met, looking over a head that nestled on his breast, two innocent and calm blue eyes of the young lawyer.

Mr. Gray, not in the least discomposed, made a movement to arise, and the act disturbed the position which Miss had apparently found so comfortable. She raised her head, and following the gaze of her companion, saw, framed as it were in the doorway, the figure of a young and elegant woman.

Miss Shaw had by this time recovered the use of her tongue.

"Pray, don't disturb yourself, Mr. Gray," she said, with a look that gave point to her words; "I can call again," and she disappeared.

Miss and the master had yet hardly spoken. Miss retained her seat, and winding one finger in his beard, she gave him a wilful little jerk, saying:

"Another Clytie, bad man."

"No, Lissy, not another Clytie."

## CHAPTER XVI.

## A LAWYER'S THEORY.

Miss was not greatly disturbed by the apparition. There are moments when the tired soul sunk into a delicious rest serenely rises above the storms and troubles of life, or even the approach of death. Such a moment Miss now experienced. The planet might tremble and shake beneath her, but what did she care? Had she not found her hero, and did not his eyes beam upon her face the same tender love as of old?

The sweet silence was at last broken. Mr. Gray began to question her and she replied. It was a long story, and her seeming indifference to any past trouble in view of her present happiness made it longer than it would have been had she met Mr. Shaw instead of his young associate. She had nothing to keep back, knew nothing that he might not know, but she let him draw the particulars from her as if he feared dreading that when the story was finished Mr. Gray would slip from her grasp.

But by dint of question and answer Mr. Gray arrived at the knowledge now possessed by the reader. A wide field for conjecture still lay open before him. Who was this woman whom he had supposed to be Miss's mother? Was she one of those unnatural mothers that form a terrible exception to the rule that teaches motherly love as an instinct superior in force and constancy to the influence of vice or the warpings of education, or was she an adventuress attracted to Miss as a possible heiress through whom she might reach wealth and position? Who was Waters, and what was he to the supposed widow of the deceased Smith? Waters was the probable murderer of Miss's father. Waters had enjoyed the rich mine which Miss's father was working in secret. Waters might have conjectured that he could not always keep his possession a secret, and that when the fact of his working Smith's claim became known, he would be invited to surrender the claim to Smith's orphan child. What would a desperate, unscrupulous man be likely to do in such a situation? He might kill the orphan, but this course would not make him the orphan's heir. He could not kill the entire settlement of Smith's Pocket, though there was a strong probability that the entire settlement of Smith's Pocket might kill him.

Lawyers always construct theories when they cannot discover facts. A good lawyer examines his theory closely and rejects it if not consistent with facts as they appear. A bad lawyer clings to his pet theory even after investigation shows

that it is founded on an imperfect knowledge of facts.

Mr. Gray was not yet a good lawyer in the full sense of the term, but his mind was of the character good lawyers are made of. He now constructed his theory, mentally reserving the right to modify it materially or reject it entirely should future investigation prove it to be erroneous.

His theory was this: Waters had discovered Smith in possession of a rich claim. Waters had reasoned to himself that a man of Smith's character might do anything and not excite surprise, and among the acts he might naturally commit was that of murder. Waters therefore had killed Smith and stealthily taken possession of the claim. Waters had worked it with great success. But Waters in time became apprehensive that he would be discovered and driven from the claim. Waters then set himself to devise measures to avoid this misfortune. Waters had a wife or mistress who, judging from Waters's character, might be a clever, unscrupulous woman. Waters conceived the idea of having this woman present herself in the character of Smith's widow and Miss's mother. In this character she would be heir to one-half of Smith's claim in her right as widow, and as guardian of Miss would take possession of the other half. Waters meantime keeps in the background. The affray in which McNagley had lost his life was forced upon Waters and brought on a crisis sooner than he intended. The woman however acted promptly and successfully. She succeeded in convincing judge and court that she was Smith's widow.

As Smith's widow she was entitled to the guardianship of Miss. But Waters lived and possibly had some hold on the woman. Waters therefore must be appeased. Known to have committed one murder, and suspected of another, the State of California was not a safe residence. Waters designed therefore to have Mrs. Smith get complete possession of the proceeds of the sale of Smith's claim, and then in company with that lady leave the State for her own good. Miss would always form a clue to detection, therefore Miss must be got rid of. The Industrial School or the Magdalen Asylum were places from which the complaints of young girls could not be heard distinctly. It would not be difficult to make the public believe that a willful, erratic girl like Miss needed a more powerful restraint than a fond mother's love. The statement of Miss, if charged with impropriety of conduct, would not be relied on implicitly. There was a good prospect therefore of carrying out such a scheme successfully.

But Miss had run away, and while seeking the protection of the law had fallen into his hands. What should he do with her? What could he do with her? She was verging upon womanhood, he quite a young man. In Smith's Pocket his protection to a child of twelve had not subjected her to scandal. In San Francisco, a like protection to a young girl of thirteen might be misconstrued.

But there was one point upon which Mr. Gray was firm. Miss should not be returned to the woman known as Mrs. Smith. That lady would doubtless claim her, but that lady should not have her. Not at least until the law had sifted her pretensions.

"Did I do right to run away?" asked Miss.

"Quite right, my child."

"Then you won't send me back?"

"Never."

That assurance was enough. She would not tease him more than she could help. She would let him see his new Clytie.

The last privilege she regarded as the height of generosity. Her eyes, grown soft and shy, stole glances at his face. She was thinking if she could do that hardest thing for a woman to do—share a heart she prized with another of her sex.

Mr. Gray had no nice elderly lady friend to whom he could present Miss as a protegee of his own, but he realized that he must place her in charge of some person of her own sex. For one night he could count on his own landlady, but permanent provision must be made for her in some other house.

Miss was not troubled with any of these perplexing considerations. She would go wherever he said and be so good.

The next morning Mr. Gray sought an interview with Mr. Shaw. There were three hours each day during which that gentleman was an excellent lawyer and a half of one of these three hours Mr. Gray monopolized.

In clear, succinct language here capitulated the leading points of the story, dwelling chiefly upon its legal aspect. The sentimental element he dismissed with the simple statement that she had been a pupil of his in whom he felt an interest.

Mr. Shaw listened with more interest than he usually displayed in matters of business.

"Where is the child now?" he asked.

"I placed her in charge of the landlady last night, and she will remain there until I find a better place."

"Can you depend upon your landlady to conceal her if she should be sought for?"

"I have no right to expect my landlady to incur responsibility on my account."

"Of course not. We must find some other place for her. It must not be with you, for the girl's mother knows where to find you, and she will naturally suspect the child has come to you. I am surprised that she did not come here instead of going to the chief of police."

"To the chief of police?"

"That officer last night received information that a girl about twelve years of age had left her home. It is intimated also that a young man had something to do with the flight. The girl doubtless is your friend—the young man is probably yourself."

Mr. Gray was a cool temperament, but he looked a little bewildered at this charge.

"At least," continued the astute lawyer, "this is the aspect the case will be made to wear. The woman is clever. She would paralyze the arm of the child's only friend by making him appear to be implicated in the child abduction."

"Do you know the woman?"

"I only know her legal adviser. His name is Hopp."

"Ah, Hopp!"

"A deep fellow. He can follow a clue better than any man I know. He has got a good case. The law is on his side. The mother is the child's natural guardian. The child is peculiar; she will be made to appear to be bad. The court will be asked to place her under wholesome restraint. Unless we prove a great deal more than we can prove yet, the court will do as asked."

"Am I to understand that you object to taking the case?"

"By no means. Hopp may beat us, but he shall not frighten us. The first thing we have to do is to place the child under proper protection. A young man, however well-intentioned, is not eligible to the position."

"What do you propose?"

"I will take her to my own house and conceal her until we can strengthen our position."

"But your family—it may be unpleasant—"

"My family can be depended upon to conceal anything Mr. Hopp wants to find—to find anything Mr. Hopp wants concealed. The first step is to remove the child from your house to mine. You must not appear in the matter as you are probably watched. Neither must she be seen in the street, as she would be arrested and taken back to her mother. Don't let us make a mistake at the start."

"What course do you suggest?"

"Give me a note to the child, directing her to trust herself with the bearer as if he were yourself. Another note to your landlady directing her to give the child up. A trusty messenger

ger and a close carriage will accomplish the rest."

Mr. Gray prepared the note as requested, and Mr. Shaw sent a line to his wife desiring her to take charge of a young girl who would shortly arrive. An hour later Mr. Shaw received the following note from his daughter:

"DEAR PAPA:—Please tell Mr. Gray that his protégé is safe. Yours,  
REGINA."

Mr. Shaw handed the note to Mr. Gray.

"My daughter seems to comprehend the situation," he said. "By the way, why are you not friends?"

"Suppose you ask Miss Shaw."

"I have; and Miss Shaw tells me to ask you."

"We are not acquainted."

"My dear fellow, we must not hold women to a strict account. Give them latitude. Forget all they do that you do not like, and remember all they do that you do like. In this way they will always appear charming. Perhaps Miss Shaw avoided you before she knew your worth. Perhaps she was rude; she is sometimes. But she has a good heart, and is less spoiled by flattery than most girls as pretty as she. Come and dine with us to-day."

"Not to-day, thank you. If I am suspected of having aided Miss Smith to escape, her mother will look for her wherever I may go."

"True. I had forgotten about Miss Smith. Is she a pretty child?"

"Sometimes."

"That means that her beauty depends upon the mood she is in. She has a little temper, perhaps."

"A somewhat unruly temper. She has never been properly trained. But she is brave, honest, impulsive, and truthful."

"These are the cardinal traits of character. Such girls, if violent and headstrong in youth, make noble women."

Mr. Shaw now fortified himself for his duty in court by a stiff glass of brandy, and sallied out in high spirits.

Miss Shaw had given the scene she had accidentally witnessed in Mr. Gray's office more consideration than it was apparently entitled to in view of the fact that she was but slightly acquainted with one party and wholly unacquainted with the other. Her father had always spoken of Mr. Gray as being wholly occupied with business, and averse to forming other than business acquaintance with ladies who called at the office. But Miss Shaw's limited knowledge of legal affairs did not comprehend a business acquaintance which would justify the attitude in which she had found the young lawyer and his youthful client. She herself, the daughter of his principal, a young lady much

admired and conscious that admiration was her due, had found him cold, austere, and singularly unimpressible. Her sweetest smiles had not warmed him into the slightest manifestation of that admiration she was accustomed to receive. Yet this little girl had found the way to his arms and nestled there, as if it was the softest place to rest on earth.

Several times Miss Shaw admonished herself that it was nothing to her whom Mr. Gray held in his arms. He was a man, and men were not harshly censured for such manifestations of tenderness to a child. But still the scene would recur and she experienced a restless curiosity to know what it meant.

The next morning Miss Shaw was with her mother when Mr. Shaw's note was placed in that lady's hands.

"Dear me," exclaimed Mrs. Shaw, languidly, "how very inconsiderate your father is. Read that, dear."

Miss Shaw read it. Her bright eyes sparkled. Her mind, by some inexplicable process known only to her sex, connected the little girl she had seen in Mr. Gray's office with the little girl they were requested to receive. It flashed through the young lady's mind also that by being very attentive and kind to Mr. Gray's protégé she would cause herself to appear in a more favorable light to Mr. Gray himself.

Mrs. Shaw was a delicate, nervous little lady, who had some years before resolved to be an invalid, partly because she was indisposed to the exertion imposed by good health, and partly because the character was interesting in itself. Her invalidism might have taken a more decided form but for the fact that she was a member of a fashionable church and conscientiously scrupulous in the performance of the duties pertaining to the position. Her conscience was more tender on this point since she was aware that she monopolized all the religious sentiment in the family. Mr. Shaw was theoretically in favor of religion—for other people. Miss Shaw was too full of this world to give much thought to the other—and Bob, the black sheep of the family, could neither be coaxed nor driven to church.

Upon Miss Shaw, therefore, devolved such household duties as could not be performed by servants. Upon Miss Shaw in this instance devolved the duty of receiving the young girl Mr. Shaw had so inconsiderately imposed upon them.

The young lady had not much time for reflection. Ten minutes after Mr. Shaw's note was received, a close carriage stopped at the door, a small figure veiled and wrapped in a large shawl alighted and quickly ascended the steps. Miss

Shaw herself opened the door, the man who had accompanied the child saw her inside, then returned to the carriage and was driven off.

The two girls were alone. Miss Shaw took her visitor by the hand and led her to the family sitting-room. Miss Shaw threw off her veil and shawl and glanced around, her eyes resting at last on her companion's face.

"Ah!" Miss exclaimed, a flush stealing over her dark features, "is it you?"

"Do you recognize me?" asked the other, smiling.

"It was you who came to Mr. Gray's office last night," replied Miss, and the flush became deeper.

"Yes; Mr. Gray's office is my father's office. I went to see my father."

"O," said Miss, relieved.

"I suspect Mr. Gray is an old friend of yours," said Miss Shaw, kindly, drawing the child to a seat on the lounge.

"O, so old," replied Miss, perhaps confounding time with a sense of service rendered.

"But you are not so very old," rejoined Miss Shaw, laughingly.

"No; but it seems so long. What made Mr. Gray send me here?"

"I suppose he thought you'd be taken good care of here."

"Does he come here very often?"

"No; I have never met him but once. He does not come here at all."

Miss was silent for a moment. She was evidently undecided whether to regard Miss Shaw as another Clytie who would try to steal her friend away from her or as a young lady with whom she might form friendly relations.

Miss Shaw employed the time in writing a note to her father, which the reader has already seen. She then turned to Miss

"My father wrote to me to expect you," she said, "but he did not tell me your name."

"My name is Melissa Smith. Mr. Gray calls me Lissy. What is your name?"

"Regina Shaw."

"Regina Shaw! How odd!"

"Odd! Why?"

"Is Robert Shaw your brother?"

"Yes," answered Regina, the color rising on her cheek. "Have you ever met him?"

"I don't think the Robert Shaw I mean is your brother. He is not a bit like you."

"Robert Shaw is not like me. I hope he is not bad, but he is wild and spends his time with low people. Sometimes I do not see him for a whole week."

"It is the same," said Miss, with her old vehemence of expression. "I don't like him. If he comes here I won't stay."

"My dear child, he shan't see you. No one shall see you. You must stay because Mr. Gray wants you to stay."

Miss softened at this appeal, and consented to remain, on condition, however, that Mr. Robert Shaw should not be informed of her presence in his father's house.

"I won't question you more now," said Miss Shaw; "there is some mystery about you, but I know you are a nice little girl. Some time, if Mr. Gray doesn't object, you shall tell me all about yourself."

## CHAPTER XVII.

## MRS. SMITH MAKES A CALL.

Two days later the young gentleman who officiated as office-boy and messenger to the firm of Shaw & Co., was surprised in the performance of a difficult feat in gymnastics by the soft rustle of a silk dress beside him. When he looked up, the wearer, a remarkably handsome lady with a satin complexion and very bright eyes, was standing beside him, seemingly very much interested in watching his performance.

"Is this Mr. Shaw's office?" she asked in a soft, satin-like voice, that fell low and distinct upon the ear.

"Yes, ma'am—excuse me; Mr. Shaw is not in."

"I don't think I need to trouble Mr. Shaw. My business is not very important. Perhaps you could answer the question I would ask."

Timothy Dwight, known in that office and on the street as Tim, was sixteen years of age. He had been in Mr. Shaw's office three years. He had read some law books in his leisure moments, when exhausted by the performance of some perilous gymnastic feat, and had listened to some conversation on legal topics. He considered himself a pretty good lawyer, and was a little flattered at the lady's suggestion that he might be consulted in the place of his master. Tim, therefore, made haste to place a chair for the lady, and signify that he was at her service.

"The first question I wish to ask," resumed the lady, "is concerning a young girl who visited this office. Did you happen to see her?"

Tim remembered Miss. He remembered how Miss had rushed into Mr. Gray's arms and the effect such an exhibition of affection had produced upon him. If Tim answered in the affirmative, Tim described the girl. Tim described the meeting, greatly encouraged at the smiling approval he read in the lady's handsome eyes.

"Would you know this young girl if you should see her again?"

Tim was quite certain he should. Her features were engraved upon the tablets of his memory. He was certain he could pick her out from several thousand young girls of the same age, height, and general appearance.

Tim was rewarded with another smile. This time the smile seemed to say that in the lady's opinion Tim's habit of acute observation would eventually secure him a seat in Congress, perhaps in the Presidential chair itself.

"Did you observe," continued the lady, after having paid this silent tribute to Tim's powers of observation, "if the young girl went away alone?"

"The young girl did not go away alone; she went away with Mr. Gray."

"Did Mr. Gray return to the office that evening?"

Mr. Gray did not.

"Was Mr. Gray in the habit of returning to his office in the evening?"

Mr. Gray was in the habit of returning to his office in the evening.

The lady sighed and brought her soft glance to bear more fully upon Tim's face. She raised her white, jeweled hand and laid it upon Tim's shoulder.

"Did Tim know where the young girl was at that time?"

Tim was about to relapse into the disgraceful position of a rising young lawyer who did not know everything, when a footstep on the stair saved him the humiliating confession. The footstep was followed by the entrance of Mr. Gray.

The lady withdrew her hand from Tim's shoulder and rose to her feet. She was standing when Mr. Gray appeared.

"Mr. Gray," said the lady, advancing, "I have had the pleasure of meeting you before."

"Mrs. —"

"Smith," softly aspirated the lady. "You have forgotten me. How unkind to let me know it."

Mr. Gray had not forgotten the brilliant, half-closed eyes, the pale, satin complexion, the tender smile of the lady who greeted him. He hesitated because he did not know by what name to address her.

"You do injustice to your own charms and to my powers of memory," he replied, bowing courteously. "Mrs. Smith, I imagine, is forgotten by very few people who have once known her."

"At least you know how to console me for being forgotten," she rejoined, and there was a shade of anxious inquiry in the glance she threw up to his face, for perhaps she thought it might be a misfortune to be a woman whom no one forgets.

Mr. Gray relieved Mr. Timothy Dwight of farther immediate duty as counselor-at-law, by inviting his visitor into his private office. He was not yet quite prepared for an interview he half expected, but since it had come he would not seem to shrink.

Tim stood perfectly still until the door closed, and then threw a neat handkerchief by way of relief.

Mrs. Smith took a seat back to the window, not for getting to assume her most graceful position, and to assure herself that her rich silk robe fell around her person and upon the floor in the sweeping fold ladies so much admire. Thus placed, her side to Mr. Gray, so that she could give him her face or withhold it without seeming to do so, she said:

"You have neglected us, Mr. Gray."

Mr. Gray pleaded guilty. He had been much occupied with business, he had not known if Mrs. Smith had come to the city, or if so, where she resided.

"You need not apologize. I heard how in six months you have become a well-known lawyer. It was great rise from a little country school. But Miss has taken your neglect sadly at heart."

"Miss! Does she still remember me? How is the dear child?"

"Miss is well, but I am not sure she would like to hear you call her child."

"Miss is only thirteen."

"In this State girls of thirteen are sometimes women. Miss has matured very rapidly of late."

"Is she as odd and charming as ever?"

"She grows pretty, I think. Perhaps it is a mother's partial eye."

So far they had fenced purposely for occupation's sake. Neither deceived the other. Mrs. Smith knew Mr. Gray had seen Miss within three days, and Mr. Gray knew that Mrs. Smith had not seen Miss for a still longer term of time. The lady was the first to make a reconnaissance in force.

"I have come to consult you, Mr. Gray, not as a lawyer but a friend—a friend to Miss."

Mr. Gray bowed in silence.

"The child has fallen in with bad associates. She defies restraint and is sometimes gone days at a time. What shall I do?"

"Do, madam," exclaimed Mr. Gray, turning quickly and looking in her face, "are you her mother?"

The suddenness of the question put the lady out. Her face blanched, her black eyes glittered, and the false smile that ever played about her mouth flickered and went out.

"Really, Mr. Gray, your energy is uncalled for. Of course I am her mother. But you know I was separated from her from infancy till she was twelve years of age. I fear I have never succeeded in winning her love."

Mr. Gray was satisfied in his own mind on one point. The woman was not Miss's mother. One prop in his theory.

"Where is Mr. Waters?" he asked quietly.

"Mr. Waters! Whom do you mean?"

The man who killed McNagley in Smith's claim."

"O! I had forgotten his name. How should I know where he is?"

"I thought you might. I believe he is an old friend of yours."

"Not a friend. I had met him in the stage before that unfortunate occurrence, but I never knew him."

The woman was looking straight before her so that Mr. Gray could not see her face, but he thought he detected a quaver in her voice. It seemed less sweet and low and silvery than usual. It encouraged him, to perceive that she could not be without wining. Perhaps, however, it was only a latent fear of detection.

"Mrs. Smith," he said, "we are here alone. No one need know what passes between us. Are you willing to surrender the guardianship of Miss to a proper person whom the court may appoint, if you are permitted to enjoy a widow's half of Mr. Smith's estate?"

She turned quietly, though with shyness in her eyes and defiance in her gesture, and asked:

"How dare you make such a proposition to me? I am her mother."

"I have not disputed that point. But you and Miss do not get on well together. Why not let her go?"

"Because I—won't."

"Very well. It is nothing to me. You know, doubtless, if you can afford to brave the searching investigation that a lawsuit will involve."

"I can afford to brave any investigation that can be set on foot. I know my own record and I will maintain my own right."

"Do so; it is your privilege. But remember that the law has sharp eyes. It can follow the most ob-

scure person day by day to the hour of their birth. It can bring deeds to light that have been forgotten. It searches graveyards and tombs; it makes the dead speak if their evidence is needed to protect the living."

There was a moment of silence, and then Mrs. Smith turned on him with a smiling face.

"The conversation has taken a singular turn. I came here to consult with you about my daughter. You talk of law, graveyards and tombstones."

"I have nothing more to say on these topics. I beg of you to remember, however, that I offered you peace and affluence."

"I shall always remember your kindness. Your motives, I am sure, are purely disinterested. Is it not a little singular, however, that you continue your interest in my daughter only on the condition that she absconds her mother?"

"My interest in Miss will continue under any possible circumstance. What I suggest, I deem better for you and for her."

"Why should I surrender my daughter to strangers?"

"The time is not come yet to tell you why."

"Your reply is a veiled threat. What have I done that you should turn against me?"

"I know of nothing that you have done. I based my proposition on the statement that Miss had passed out of your control. I may add, also, that at this moment, while you sit here, officers of the law are searching for her at your instigation."

"You know this, then?"

"Since three days."

"And you know, doubtless, why they do not find her?"

"Madam, I only know that it is a cruel and heartless act to advertise a girl of thirteen as a runaway, giving out intimations that she is consorting with the dregs of the community. Do you know, if the officers find her, what they will do to her?"

"They will bring her to me."

"That you may cover her with disgrace by sending her to some public institution for safe-keeping—some Magdalen Asylum for a child."

The woman sprang to her feet, facing him with the fury of a savage.

"You lie!" she exclaimed hoarsely; "I have no such purpose."

"Madam, four days ago, at your room on Kearny street, the whole plan was talked over between you and the murderer, Waters."

"It is false! I have not seen Waters for six months."

"I give you the benefit of the statement."

"Coward! If I were a man you would not dare to thus insult me."

"Unless I am misinformed, you have a man at your disposal."

The woman was a woman after all. At this taunt, which the young man regretted as soon as uttered, she uttered a low cry and sank weeping upon a chair.

Mr. Gray stood self-convicted. His zeal for Miss had carried him too far. He had given a woman just cause for tears. He felt himself a coward and wished she would rise up and strike him. Anything but sob—sob—as if her heart would break.

Mr. Gray endured the infliction with a fortitude

born of helplessness. He could not retract. He was too much of a lawyer for that. So he sat in troubled silence while the woman went. At last the tempest subsided. The sobs came less frequent. The flutter of a delicate lace-bordered handkerchief informed him that the drying process had commenced. The lady slowly raised her head. The drying process was complete. Her eyes were sad and reproachful, but her passion had gone with her tears.

"You have been misinformed, Mr. Gray. It is the misfortune of my sex to be suspected. I forgive you."

The young man thought that if the lady had been a man, a little explanation might have been required from her. When gentlemen give the lie they are held responsible. But he was too glad to perceive that she was preparing to go to prolong the conversation.

She arose, seeing that he maintained an obstinate silence, and gathered her shawl about her.

"Good day, sir," she said.

"Good day, madam."

Tim had not deserted his post. He was balancing a ruler on his thumb, when the door opened and the handsome lady, serene and smiling, again stood before him.

"Let me thank you for your kindness," she said, softly; "I may see you again."

She bowed graciously and disappeared. Tim mentally compared her with other ladies who questioned him, as if he had been an animated piece of furniture, or ignored his presence as they pass in or out.

A few minutes' walk brought Mrs. Smith to her residence. She had been in her room but a moment when she was joined by a man the reader would have suspected to be Waters but for the fact that he wore a handsome blonde beard and hair of a like hue.

"Well," he said, after assuring himself that they were alone. "What success?"

"Miss is under Mr. Gray's protection."

The man replied by an oath so comprehensive in scope that it included both the lawyer and his protégé.

Mrs. Smith, not in the least shocked, related her interview with Tim.

"The young hell-cat! How did she find him?"

"That's of little importance. She has found him. How shall we get her away from him?"

The sister lines grew deep around the man's mouth.

"He has not forgotten you," said the lady in her softest tone. "At least he asked after the man who killed McNugley."

The man preserved a moody silence.

"Don't you think," whispered Mrs. Smith, still soaking in her dulcet tones, "that it would be better to be known as the man who killed Mr. Gray?"

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### BOB SHAW AT HOME.

Mr. Gray understood that war was declared. The other party had nothing to gain by the

apse of time. The case hurried into court would certainly go in their favor. The statement of Mliss, which Mr. Gray implicitly believed, would hardly be accorded sufficient weight to invalidate the natural right of a parent to the guardianship of her child.

There were two courses of investigation open for him to pursue. One was to trace Smith back to the date of Mliss's birth and ascertain by living witnesses, if possible, whether the mother of Mliss had died, or had separated from Mr. Smith. If it could be proved conclusively that the mother of Mliss had died, of course Mrs. Smith could not be her mother.

If it should appear that the mother of Mliss had not died, it might be proved by persons who had known the mother, that Mrs. Smith was or was not her mother.

This would take time, but it was possible of accomplishment.

The other course was to trace Mrs. Smith's life back to the period when Mliss was born. This would take time, but was likewise possible of accomplishment.

Mr. Shaw entered heart and soul into the case. His advice was invaluable. He was well acquainted with the secret means by which such investigations are pursued, and with detectives most celebrated for skill and fidelity.

A paper was prepared petitioning the proper court to enjoin the woman claiming to be the mother of Mliss from exercising any of the rights of guardianship over the person or property of Melissa Smith, setting forth the ground upon which the petition was asked. The court was also petitioned to enjoin the woman claiming to be the widow of the late J. Smith from appropriating any of the proceeds of the estates so, her own use or benefit, excepting such sum as the court might allow for her maintenance until the question of her right as widow was legally settled.

The principal witnesses for the petitioners were Mr. Gray and Bill Green, the driver of the Wingdam stage, who had been summoned to the city by Mr. Gray. The court ordered Mliss to be produced, and questioned her privately. The impression she produced was so favorable that her statement was taken under oath.

Mrs. Smith testified in effect as follows:

"Was born in London, England, in 1833. Arrived in San Francisco in June, 1851. Had worked in a milliner store and had been attached to a theatrical company under an assumed name. Was married to John Smith, the father of Melissa Smith, in Stockton in April, 1852. Melissa Smith was born in May, 1853. About a year after the birth Melissa, witness and Smith quarreled. Witness left Smith and had never lived with him since. Heard the report of his striking a rich quartz vein in Red Mountain. Heard afterward that he became dissipated, and finally that he had committed suicide. Soon after, witness went up to Red Mountain to see the child, and learned that Smith had died possessed of a very rich claim. The right of witness and Mliss to the claim had been confirmed by

the District Court for the Red Mountain precinct and she had been placed in possession. The claim had since been sold for sixty thousand dollars to a company from San Francisco. The proceeds had been invested in her own name for the joint benefit of herself and Mliss."

The testimony of the woman was thus far in her favor. When called upon to account for her investments she hesitated, and finally admitted that she had acted under the advice of a male friend, who was at that time absent from the city. She could not tell where the money was invested, but understood it was in land in the southern part of the city. She had a bank account in her own name at the Bank of California. Her failure to account for the use she had made of the large sum she had received proved fatal. The court held that the rights of the minor heir were in jeopardy, and answered the prayer of the petitioners by granting a temporary injunction, restricting the respondent to the use of the sum of two hundred dollars a month until such time as a final hearing should be had, forbidding her in the meantime from making any conveyance of any portion of the property in question, or receiving any moneys for conveyances already made. The court, after consultation with the child and the friends of the child, would appoint a temporary guardian to act until the main petition of the petitioners as to the fact of respondent being the mother of Mliss and widow of the late J. Smith should be adjudicated.

The decision was a victory for the petitioners. Mliss was free from the control of her mother, and her fortune was under the protection of the law. The main question—as to the fact of the woman known as Mrs. Smith being the widow of the late J. Smith—was still to be decided. Mr. Gray was appointed temporary guardian empowered to inquire into the disposal of the moneys Mrs. Smith had received.

These proceedings had occupied about ten days. During this time Mr. Gray had not seen Mliss until he met her in court. Acting under instructions from Mr. Shaw, she had bowed to him, but had restrained from any more fervent manifestations of affection.

But every day Mliss had sent to her legal adviser a characteristic little note in which Miss Shaw figured conspicuously. At first the jealous little creature was chary of her praise, referring to Miss Shaw as his "new Clytie," but gradually, possibly because satisfied that Miss Shaw and Mr. Gray did not meet, she became more unreserved in her commendations of the young lady, and finally as a great favor gave Mr. Gray permission to come and see Miss Shaw. "But," she added, "you must promise to be good."

Mr. Gray laid these missives in a private drawer, the key of which he carried in his vest pocket. For the first time perhaps the question occurred to him if this childish affection which was so playfully exacting might not become troublesome. He had never realized that Mliss would ever grow up. As a child her oddities, her impulsiveness, her quaint ways and queer talk, had amused him. Her forlorn condition had inspired his compassion. The manliness of his nature responded to the helplessness of her youth and sex. When he had heard boys taunt her with faults that were the result of her neglected childhood, he always felt an impulse to whip the boys and take the girl to his heart.

But this was not because Mliss was a girl, but because she was at war with everybody, an isolated little heart defiantly gnawing at its own vitals. When she had thrown herself so passionately before him and exclaimed that she hated everybody, that she hated herself, that she wished she was dead, he had experienced a strange sympathy for a nature so sensitive and a condition so unhappy. No lover had watched the threatening brow of his mistress more anxiously than he had looked at this child's face for a sign of growing contentment and peace. But he had not thought of her as a woman. It was a pity nature was not so organized that girls should never complete their twelfth year.

The hour had come when, the office freed from business callers, Mr. Gray prepared for the morrow. Tim embraced this opportunity to make flying trips to neighboring offices, or to practice some new feat of gymnastics with which to astound his young companions when opportunity should offer. He was very adroitly balancing a long-handled dusting-brush on the end of his nose, his eyes following the line of the slender rod and keenly watching the sway of the feathers, and was thoroughly absorbed in the fascinating occupation, when turning toward the door in a quick movement by which he hoped to frustrate the operation of the law of gravitation, he beheld fixed upon him a pair of laughing eyes. The dusting-brush slipped from Mr. Timothy Dwight's nose and fell to the floor. The law of gravitation was victorious at last.

"Tim," said the lady to whom the laughing eyes belonged, "when you give a public exhibition send me fifty tickets. I'll make fifty friends buy one as an indirect encouragement of art."

"You needn't chaff a fellow, Miss Reginia," replied the lad; "you'd do it if you could."

"Perhaps I would," answered the lady, advancing.

"Let me try."

"Better begin with something that isn't so top-heavy," said Tim, assuming the role of instructor. "Here's a ruler; better rest it on your chin at first till you get the balance of the thing."

Miss Shaw forgot for a moment that she was a young lady of eighteen, and entered heartily into the sport. Her success was not brilliant. The ruler, attracted perhaps by the pretty face, inclined toward it as if disposed for an embrace.

The noise of the sport penetrated to Mr. Gray in the adjoining room. Thinking that Tim was entertaining some of his street companions with a gymnastic rehearsal, he opened the door just in time to witness Miss Shaw's fourth and partially successful attempt to balance the ruler on her chin. Her side was toward him, and with her head thrown a little back, one neatly clad foot peeping from under the folds of her dress, and one gloved hand raised to catch the ruler should it fall, she formed a rather pretty picture.

Mr. Gray would have retired to his office, but Tim, from habit, kept one eye on the office door, and he whispered to his fair pupil:

"Buttons! There's Mr. Gray."

"Buttons" was not Tim's favorite expletive, but it was one which he had been induced to adopt by stratagem. His mother, a pious widow lady, had been one day terribly shocked by hearing from the lips of her darling boy a shorter and more emphatic



expletive which is classed among the words profane. She remonstrated, but as Tim grew older the profane expletive was the more frequently resorted to, especially when Tim was under any great stress of feeling. Tim's mother suggested "buttons" as a substitute, but Tim did not readily fall into her idea. After much prayerful consideration, assisted by her pastor, the lady hit upon a plan. Tim was extremely anxious to possess a gold watch and a gold chain. On his fourteenth birthday his desire was gratified. The watch was in his fob and the chain dangling from the second button-hole in his vest. He wore it grandly for an hour, when some little ebullition of feeling caused him to utter the forbidden word. To Tim's great mortification the watch and chain were taken from him and carefully laid in his mother's bureau drawer. The lady then very firmly laid down a law not to be found in the Revised Statutes. On every occasion when Tim uttered the forbidden word he was to be deprived of his watch and chain for a week. To his remonstrance that a "fellow couldn't always think," the excellent lady again suggested "buttons." It was a harmless word, yet it would answer every purpose for which the more sinful expletive was employed. After this Tim wore his watch the greater part of the time. Occasionally for a week it would need repairs, but in time either Tim or Tim's watch less frequently got out of order.

Miss Shaw had heard from Tim's mother the affecting story of Tim's reformation, and knew for what word "buttons" was a substitute. As a prelude to an announcement of the appearance of Mr. Gray it was so judicious that she could not restrain an impulse to laugh.

"I beg pardon, Mr. Gray, I did not intend to disturb you. Or rather," she added, "I did intend to disturb you. I have not come to see Mr. Shaw this time."

She looked dangerously pretty as she turned toward him, the color mounting to her cheek, her eyes dancing with merriment. Mr. Gray took her offered hand, and led her into his office.

"Papa says," she continued, giving a glance from the corner of her eyes, "that you only talk to ladies on business. Is it so?"

"I suppose all rules have their exceptions," he replied.

"Yes, I suspect so."

"Perhaps it is better not to make rules to apply to young ladies."

"It saves breaking them," she rejoined demurely.

The idea that his visitor was exceedingly pretty was already established in Mr. Gray's mind. The idea was also dawning upon his mind that she was disposed to be friendly to himself. He could not at that moment give any good reason why her advances should be repulsed. Mingled with a sentiment of admiration awakened by her beauty and deepened by her kindness to Miss Shaw, was a sentiment of compassion. Unconscious, as she supposed to herself, she was threatened with serious misfortune. He could not shut his eyes to the fact that Mr. Shaw was falling in health, and at Mr. Shaw's death his family would be left without the slightest provision for the future. This young girl, so radiant in prosperity, did not seem particularly well adapted to adversity.

Some such thoughts as these passed through his mind as she sat there idly talking, and under their influence his reserve gradually melted. From ordinary social topics they passed on to others of a more confidential nature. He found that she too had been looking into the future and its darkness troubled her. A slight indisposition of Mr. Shaw had given the family physician an opportunity to intimate that Mr. Shaw could not long continue his present course of life. The physician had gone so far as to say that Mr. Shaw's health was rapidly breaking up under the influence of excessive stimulants. The toning up process had been carried too far. The young girl loved her father devotedly. She loved him the more deeply as she found it impossible to love her only brother as she wanted to love him. And that brother was going from bad to worse. He had not been at home in ten days, but twice in that time had been arrested for fighting, and saved from prison only by the payment of a fine.

Miss Shaw probably did not intend to touch on these topics, when she entered the office. She had found sympathy when she was expecting only cold manifestations of respect. The change coming at a time when she felt so keenly the need of a strong arm to lean on surprised her into confidence she herself wondered at afterward.

The early November evening had set in meantime. Mr. Gray had dismissed Tim, who for once had not dismissed himself, and lighted the gas. Miss Shaw looked at her watch.

"Why," she exclaimed, with a look of surprise in her hazel eyes, "I have been here almost two hours."

The fact could not be denied. Mr. Gray's watch told the same scandalous story. Miss Shaw, however, contented herself with the statement and remained half an hour longer. At last she rose to go. Mr. Gray, of course, claimed the privilege of seeing her home. Miss Shaw was sorry to give him so much trouble, but accepted. She drew on her gloves, wrapped her shawl around her and waited for him to put away his papers. By a fortunate chance she first passed out of the inner office and turned in the dimmer light to wait. He joined her in a moment and placed his hand on the knob of the hall door to open it.

The knob turned, but the door did not open. Examination showed that the door had been locked and the key taken away.

"What does this mean?" asked the lady in surprise.

"Tim would not dare to play us such a trick."

"It isn't Tim," answered Mr. Gray, in a whisper.

"Come back, quick."

Miss Shaw yielded to his arm, and returned to the inner office. She observed now that her companion was pale, and his voice, as he attempted to reassure her, was not as firm as usual. Mr. Gray closed the door and bolted it, the lady looking on in silent wonderment.

Such of our readers as have passed ten days expecting at any moment to see a desperate enemy spring from ambush with deadly intent, will understand the impulse under which Mr. Gray acted. His residence in communities where human life is held in little value when opposed to human ambitions had awakened a sense of danger another might not have thought

of. Miss Shaw did not understand how the door should close and lock itself, and the key walk away, but the only emotion she experienced was surprise. Mr. Gray, however, looked instinctively for a cause. That cause in his mind was Waters. Waters had in his belief killed two men that he might enjoy the wealth discovered in Smith's pocket. A third man now threatened to deprive him of the riches he had staked to gain. That third man was himself. Would the third man be allowed to escape, at least without an effort to serve him as the others had been served?

Mr. Gray was so firm in the opinion that the third man would not be allowed to escape without a struggle, that he had resolved to kill Waters at the first hostile movement. He had looked for him everywhere, in the street, in the court-room, and in his hotel. Might not Waters conceal himself in the office under cover of night, to get the first shot. The first shot with such men is everything.

Mr. Gray had hurried Miss Shaw back under the impulse of this apprehension. He was a little surprised at not receiving the salute of his enemy before he could close the door. The opportunity was too good to be lost. He stood in the light while his adversary, if there was one, was in the darkness. The presence of Miss Shaw might have deterred an aim already raised, and then his fears might be groundless. But what was to be done? Miss Shaw was waiting to go home. She was looking at him as if she did not quite understand why she was shut into that office alone with a young man. It is true she had sat there very contentedly while the road was open to go when she pleased, but the fact that it was open made all the difference in the world.

"What do you think, Mr. Gray? Who locked that door?"

"I think," he replied, "that some person is concealed in the next room."

Miss Shaw turned a little pale.

"Some person," she repeated. "Are you armed?" "Yes; of late I always go armed. But I cannot afford to give this person the advantage of a light. Will you be afraid if I turn off the gas?"

Miss Shaw said "No," but when the gas was turned off she clung to her companion's arm. Mr. Gray led her to a seat out of the range of bullets fired through the door, drew his pistol and reconnoitered.

There was no sound to indicate the presence of friend or enemy. A deep twilight pervaded the outer office, but he could discern the outlines of the large table and chairs. These might afford a shelter from which a tolerably safe attack could be made. But Mr. Gray stood in a more impenetrable darkness. The enemy, however, hearing the door open, might fire on calculation, and make a fatal shot. Mr. Gray, therefore, stepped quickly and noiselessly to one side, and then, his pistol raised to take advantage of the first movement of his unseen foe, he waited.

Five minutes passed. Waiting became tedious, and he began to reconnoiter. He came upon a chair, and raised it before him as a shield. He groped about another five minutes, and found no enemy. At last, with his pistol in his right hand, he lighted a match and lit the gas. A glance showed the room to be vacant, and a second glance revealed the outer door ajar.

Miss Shaw now came to the door, and both saw that the hall-door was open. Both knew it had been closed and locked. The conclusion was inevitable that some person had been in the outer office, and for some reason made his escape while they were in the inner office.

"Some burglar," said Mr. Gray, "whose heart softened at sight of you."

"Then you owe me your life," replied the lady, trying to smile. "But how do we know he will not come again?"

"Burglars seldom make a second attempt. The first serves as a kind of warning, and preparations are made to receive them."

"You must take care of yourself, Mr. Gray," she rejoined, with some tenderness in her tone. "There are two or three who could hardly live without you."

"Two or three! So many!"

"So many that I know of. And I don't count Miss Clytie," she added, laughing.

"Has Miss been telling tales out of school?"

"She has been telling tales about school. I wonder you ever tore yourself away from Red Mountain."

"It must have been my good angel that tore me away."

"I am sure it was our good fortune," she responded, linking her arm in his.

Mr. Gray looked down upon the still pale but tender face, and asking himself if she was playing a part. If she was, the part was pretty well played.

A search failed to find the key to the hall-door. The intruder, whoever he might be, evidently intended to come again.

He closed the door, and with his companion on his arm passed out into the street.

"Let us say nothing of this little incident," he said;

"we might be laughed at."

"You do not doubt that some person was in the office?"

"I have had no experience with doors that close and lock themselves, nor with keys that run away. Still it may be a trick."

"Perhaps it was the spirits. They do some wonderful things if half that is said of them is true."

"We will charge it to them. At all events, the spirits cannot prove an alibi."

"Do you believe there is another life after this?"

"If there is not it is hardly worth while to endure this."

"Do you think so? Now, I find life very pleasant."

"I hope you always may."

"People who have some one to love seldom are weary of life."

And people who do not love have no right to live."

A walk of fifteen minutes brought them to Miss Shaw's handsome residence on Ellis street. Mr. Gray had business at his office, but he was not stoic enough to decline Miss Shaw's invitation to dine.

Mr. Shaw was lying down more indisposed than usual, but Mr. Shaw received him graciously. As soon as she could, Regina led him to the sitting-room where Miss Shaw was waiting to receive him.

"I give you five minutes," whispered his conductor, and she withdrew.

Miss came forward with her old impetuosity and threw herself into his arms. She laid her warm cheek to his, drew back and looked at him, then gave him a swift little kiss.

"Wasn't I good to let her go for you?" she asked. "Do you like her, Lissy?"

"I do now. She is as good as she can be. Do you like her?"

"I have talked with her to-day for the second time."

"How odd! And you're been here so long."

"Miss Shaw has a great many friends and admirers. She has not time to waste on me."

Mr. Gray now saw Miss for the first time in an attire suitable to her years and her complexion. Miss Shaw, if disposed to be a rival, was no more an one. The child's splendid black hair was crimped and flowing below her waist, and a crimson band around her head lent color and warmth to her face. Her dress, longer than she had ever worn before, and cut with sufficient regard to the prevailing style, gave her little figure a more womanly shape and contour. She was far prettier than she had seemed before, but somehow the old, quaint, elish little Miss he had so loved, existed only in memory.

"Do you like me as I am," she asked, with some solicitude in her eyes, for the child was quick to read thoughts in the changing lines of the face.

"I like you always, Lissy, but I was thinking of the little girl who came into my schoolroom two years ago, and wanted to be taught. Where is she, Lissy?"

"Her heart is here, and that is all that was good in her. Would you have me bad again?"

"No, Lissy, I would have you as you are. But the old Miss, with all her badness, was dear to me."

Miss Shaw soon returned, and summoned her guests to the dining-room. Miss's right to her guardian was recognized in the arrangement of seats, and during dinner Miss Shaw adroitly led the conversation to topics in which Miss could join.

The dinner was but half over when an impatient ring at the door-bell caused a painful flush to overspread Reginia's face. A moment later a heavy step was heard in the hall, and Bob Shaw, the hero of the Free and Easy picnic, burst into the dining-room.

The young hoodlum carried his free and easy manners wherever he went. He greeted Mr. Gray, whom he had seen once before, with a ringing "Hello, old boy, glad to see you," then went up to his elegant sister, seized her around the waist and kissed both cheeks, with a heartiness that did infinite credit to his brotherly character.

"Hello," he exclaimed, catching a sight of Miss; "if here isn't our little runaway. Give us your fist, little girl."

Miss, blushing to her eyes, extended her hand. Bob shook it as if it had been a man's, and patted her patronizingly on the shoulder.

"If I'd known you'd been here, little one, I wouldn't have stayed away so long. So you found the Governor, eh? and he put you through?"

"Don't tease Miss Smith, Robert," said Miss Shaw. "She is not used to your peculiar style."

"You bet she is. She's one of us. Did not she give Red-headed Dick a liver to get beer with?"

Miss had omitted this little episode in her narra-

tive of her adventures, and now Bob related it, embellishing facts with a racy humor that forced even his sister to laugh. Mr. Gray, a thorough man of the world, fell easily into what Reginia called "Robert's peculiar style," so that Bob found himself for once a hero at his own father's table.

"Damn'd if this isn't jolly!" he exclaimed, as Mrs. Shaw gave the signal to adjourn. "Sis, I'm coming to board with you."

"O, Robert!" expostulated Mrs. Shaw, whose ear caught only the first word of the speech, "why will you use such language?"

"Damn is a good word, mother. It is a Bible word. Think I got it out of the Bible. Ain't sure. Had it a long time."

Mrs. Shaw would probably have explained to her son the difference between the use of the word as found in the Scripture, and the use he made of it, but experience suggested a doubt of the utility of such an explanation. She contented herself with a sigh, and walked slowly out of the room with the air of a woman who endeavored to bear her trials with a Christian fortitude.

"How's the Governor, Regie," asked Bob, taking his sister aside.

"Papa is not well to-night."

"Sorry. Got a little private business of an important nature to transact. Won't keep."

"I hope you are not going to ask him for money."

"That's the ticket. Have not struck the old gent for a week."

"But, Robert, papa hasn't much money now."

"Don't want much. Let him off with a five. Fact is, Sis, two of the boys got into a scrimmage, and the cops dropped down on them; one got away, but they nabbed 'tother."

"What will they do with him?"

"Send him below if he can't pay his fine."

"But papa mustn't be disturbed to-night. The doctor's afraid he's going to be sick."

"Suppose you strike Mr. Gray. He'll give it to you."

"Not to save a thousand men from jail."

"No? What notions you women have! I'd strike him, but I'm damned if I believe he'd give it to me."

"I don't think he would."

"Seems an easy sort of fellow. Takes a joke. Got a good laugh. Rather like him."

The young rascal scanned Mr. Gray a moment as if calculating his chance of striking him successfully, but the doubt he had expressed was not dissipated by a closer examination.

"Isn't so easy as he looks," he whispered to his sister. "Bet he can say no. Quiet cues."

"Robert, don't."

"Well, Sis, I'll try not. Comes so deuced natural."

But what are we going to do about that five?"

"I'm afraid your friend will have to go below. It won't hurt him much."

"Damned tiresome. Tried it once."

"Well, he should not sign."

"Should not fight! Good Lord, how would you have a fellow amuse himself."

Reginia returned no answer to his question. At that

moment it occurred to her that her brother's propensity for fighting might be utilized.

"Will you do something for me if I get five dollars," she asked.

"Anything in reason, Sis. Mustn't ask me to shake Hattie Brooks."

"You needn't shake Miss Brooks. She is as well as another."

"Fact. Hattie's a good girl."

"I hope she is. But what I shall ask does not concern her."

"Peg away then. I'll do anything in reason."

"Well," said Reginia, "papa's office was entered this evening by a burglar."

"Burglar's a damned fool. Nothing there to steal."

"Of course he is," responded Reginia.

"Is what?" questioned the sinful brother.

"A ——— fool," stammered the young girl, bridling over the awful chasm with difficulty, and turning very red in the effort.

"Don't swear, Sis. It isn't genteel."

"Will you listen, Bob?"

"Go on, Reginia."

Miss Shaw then told her brother what went on at greater length than she had told the reader.

"Think it's a burglar, Reginia?"

"What else should it be?"

"Isn't there a man mixed in the little one's case," and he looked towards Miss, who was talking to Mr. Gray.

"A man? Yes, I believe so."

"More likely to be him. Might want a private interview with Mr. Gray. Witnesses in the way sometimes."

This was a new aspect of the case, and one which needed consideration.

"But Mr. Gray said it was a burglar," urged Reginia.

"Mr. Gray couldn't know. Perhaps he thought so; perhaps he did not. Wouldn't tell you."

"But this makes it worse. If it was a burglar he'd be content with what he could steal. If it's the man——"

"Come to kill. Correct, Sis."

Miss Shaw turned paler than she had in the office when she thought a burglar was lying in wait.

"Don't be frightened, Reginia. Rather like Mr. Gray. Think he's got sand?"

"Got what?"

"Sand. Pluck. Won't scare worth a damn."

"O!" said Miss Regie, thus enlightened.

[We may add en parenthesis that Miss Reginia Shaw's naturally quick mind received frequent stores of knowledge of like character from her erratic brother.]

"I'll fix him," continued Bob, referring to the unknown visitor. "He comes after business hours, thinking to take Mr. Gray unawares. Well, I'll take him unawares. Never killed a man yet."

"But, Bob, be cautious."

"Would you care much if I should get winged?"

"Of course I would. Aren't you my only brother?" and her arms went round the young rascal's neck.

"Then you love me a little, Regie?"

"I love you a good deal, Bob, wicked as you are."

"That's right, sis. Stick to your brother. Not

bad all through. Sober down sometime."

"I hope so, Robert. If you'd only be what you might be, I should love you dearly."

"Believe you would, Regie. There's a little hoodlum blood in you. Came honestly by it. Governor was a rare old hoodlum in his young days."

The elegant Miss Shaw did not resent the imputation of having hoodlum blood in her veins, but rather redoubled her caresses of her handsome brother.

"Home's a rather nice place after all," said Bob. "Think I'll return. By the way, isn't the little one rather sweet on Mr. Gray?"

"She ought to be. He's been like a father to her."

"Rather a young father. Perhaps she likes him better for it. Go hard on her if he should be put out of the way."

"It would go hard on us, Robert. Papa could do nothing without him."

"Well, let him stick to business, and I'll do the fighting. It is more in my line. A fellow ought to be good for something. Wonder if Mr. Gray'd lend me his pistol."

"Where's yours, Bob?"

"Put it in soak the other day."

"Put it in soak?"

"Yes, some pistols have to be put in soak every few days. Depends upon who they belong to. Mine is in soak full half of the time."

"I don't understand. I should think they'd get rusty."

"Do sometimes, if we leave 'em in soak too long. When I can't help it I go to a friend of mine on Kearny street and tell him I want to soak my pistol. Friend smiles. Likes that kind of business. Gives me ten dollars to keep till I want to take the pistol out of soak."

A comical expression of mingled chagrin and merriment came over Miss Shaw's face, and in a pet she turned and walked away from her brother. Bob followed her and put his arm round her waist.

"Don't get mad, Regie. I'll find a pistol somehow, if you can find five dollars I won't bother you any more to-night."

Miss Shaw's porte-monnaie contained the required sum, and she gave it to her brother.

"Come back and sleep here to-night, Bob," she said, raising her eyes to his face with a wistful look. "Somehow I feel as if something terrible was going to happen."

"I'll come if you want me to. I thought you liked me best when I am away."

"You know better, Bob. Kiss me now and come right home."

The better impulses of the young fellow's heart were stirred, and he bent his handsome curly head, and with infinite tenderness touched his sister's lips.

"Guess I'll break with that hoodlum crowd," he said to himself, as he closed the door behind him. "Isn't one of the girls that can hold a candle to Regie."

Mr. Gray had observed this little scene from the corner of his eye, and as Reginia joined him he took her hand and pressed it gently.

"I can't help loving him when he is with me," she said.



"Don't try, Miss Shaw. A sister's love has reformed worse boys than he."

## CHAPTER XIX.

### MISS VISITS MRS. SMITH.

For three successive nights the athletic Tim was sent home in the afternoon, and at twilight set in Robert Shaw seated himself in Mr. Gray's office to await the return of the burglar. It was a severe trial of the young man's patience, as action to him was rest. He stepped forth the third night as Mr. Gray was preparing to leave for dinner.

"It's no use, Mr. Gray; Mr. Burglar twigs the game. He won't come while I'm here."

"I had much rather he came while you are here than when I am here alone, if it is all the same to him," answered Mr. Gray, pleasantly.

"It doesn't seem to be at all the same to him. These fellows like to have the odds on their side. I'll stick it out three nights longer, though it's cursed dull work."

That night when Robert went home to dinner, Miss, who had been rather shy of him, boldly took him by the arm and led him to the sitting-room.

"Are you afraid of anybody?" she asked, her black eyes fixed searchingly upon his face.

"That's a rather big question for a little girl to ask," he replied.

"Tell me," she persisted, "are you afraid of anybody?"

"Suppose I say 'no' just for the sake of getting on?"

"Would you be afraid of a man who has killed two men?"

"Now you are coming down to points. Proceed to business. Who do you want killed?"

"I have heard all this talk about a burglar. I heard you and Regie talking last night."

"Well, what then?"

"It wasn't no burglar at all. I know who it was."

"Who was, little one?"

"It was the man—the man who killed McSnagley."

"Head's clear, I guess. How do you know?"

"I know. He wants to kill Mr. Gray because Mr. Gray helped me to get away from him."

"S'pect you are right. But isn't this man your mother's friend?"

"I'll tell you something," said Miss, reddening.

"That woman isn't my mother."

"Don't go too fast, little runaway. How do you know that?"

"I can't tell. Things come to me."

"Wish things would come to me. It would save a heap of trouble."

"Did you ever know anything and not know how you know it?"

"Let me see. Isn't that question slightly meta-what do you call it?—physical?"

"Don't be a fool, Bob," said Miss, impatiently.

"I'm going to see that woman. I'm going to tell her what I know. I won't have Mr. Gray killed for me. I'll kill that man first."

"Give us your fat little girl. I like you for that. You want I should go with you and see that you have a fair show."

Miss nodded.

"Are you afraid?" she asked.

"Afraid to see you through! Not a bit of it. Didn't I tell you from the first that I'd stand by you?"

"Have you got a pistol?"

"No—not exactly. I've got a ticket."

"What good will a ticket do?"

"I'll tell you. A ticket is just half a pistol."

"How?"

"A pistol is worth twenty dollars. But a ticket and ten dollars will get a pistol."

"I don't know what you are talking about."

"Listen, little girl. Sometimes I transact business of a confidential nature with a friend of mine who lives on Kearny street. I confide my pistol to my friend and he confides nine dollars to me. It is my friend's way to call this nine dollars ten dollars. A little peculiarity of his which does not prevent him from doing a good deal of business. It is also a peculiarity of his to want his ten dollars when I want my pistol. Understand?"

Miss understood. She darted out of the room, and soon returned with ten dollars in her hand.

"Here," she said; "go and get your pistol. Don't be gone long, for if you don't come to go with me, I'll go alone."

Bob was true to his engagement. In a quarter of an hour he returned with his pistol. At dinner Miss was unusually silent, but Bob rattled off his slang talk as if he had no business of a peculiar character on his mind.

About eight in the evening they set out unobserved. Kearny street was not then the promenade it has since become, but Bob stopped occasionally to speak with a friend, and Miss strode along in something of her old rapid step, unmindful of the momentary absence of her escort.

"That girl means business," Bob said to himself.

"Think she'd shoot if she'd make up her mind to."

Miss paused at last, near the house in which Mrs. Smith had rooms.

"This is the place," she said. "You'll go up-stairs with me and see what room I go into. If I don't come out in ten minutes, you'll come in after me."

"Don't like the programme. You've got pluck, but you ain't very strong. In less than ten minutes they might put you where the devil couldn't find you."

"They won't dare to. Waters is a coward. I saw him once frightened out of his wits. I helped him off and he hadn't sense enough to run. If you go in with me she won't let me see him. If he thinks I'm alone he won't be afraid."

"Sense in that. Push ahead. I'll look out that they don't carry you off."

Miss boldly walked up the steps and turned in the passage toward the room which Mrs. Smith had oc-

cupied. Bob followed. At the door Miss paused and gave a sharp rap.

A minute that seemed perfect silence elapsed, but Miss's ear at the keyhole of the door caught the sound of a movement inside. Then a door closed softly.

Then a clear voice said: "Come in."

Miss opened the door and entered the room. Mrs. Smith sat in an easy chair by the table reading an evening paper. Whatever surprise she may have felt at the sight of Miss was concealed.

"Is it you, Miss?"

"Yes, madam, it is me. I've come to see Mr. Waters?"

"Why do you come here to see Mr. Waters?"

"Because he is here."

Miss indicated the door to Mrs. Smith's bedroom with a gesture more emphatic than graceful.

"I believe you are insane, child," said Mrs. Smith, quietly.

"No, I'm not; but I want to see Mr. Waters?"

"Mr. Waters is not here."

Miss strode to the bedroom door and threw it open. The movement was too quick to be frustrated. It was so quick that the door opened against the head of a man who had apparently been listening at the keyhole. The fearless girl grasped his arm as if to drag him by main force into the next room, but the man struck her a blow that felled her to the floor.

Half stunned by the blow, Miss was conscious of being lifted upon a man's shoulder and borne in darkness. Then came a sound of a door burst open, a heavy footstep across the floor, and the man who held her was dragged back into the lighted room.

"Drop the girl," said a familiar voice; "I'm here to see that she has a fair show."

Miss gained her feet, and in the pause her senses. Looking around, she saw Mrs. Smith, white as a ghost, Waters standing confused and irresolute, and Bob Shaw, erect but cool and composed, looking like a young hero.

"Bob," said Miss, apparently with one thought uppermost in her mind, "that is the man that killed McSnagley. That's the man that tried to kill Mr. Gray."

Waters made a move toward his accuser, but Bob put himself in the way.

"Mr. Waters," said Bob, "I don't know any thing about this McSnagley business. Perhaps he deserved killing on general principles. Perhaps he didn't. I ain't a judge, nor jury, nor policeman. But Mr. Gray is a friend of mine, and a darned good fellow. Better let him alone."

"I don't know Mr. Gray," growled Waters; "I don't know what you are talking about."

"Don't brow as you do. But Miss, here, has a habit of putting two and two together and counting four. She thinks you've got a grudge against Mr. Gray, and thinks you wouldn't mind killing a man you don't like. That's all I know about it."

"Then what the devil are you here for?"

"Miss wanted to come. Told her I'd see her through. Reckon I will."

"I believe you are Mr. Robert Shaw," said Mrs. Smith, in her clear, soft tone.

"That's my name, madam. Didn't know that I had the honor of being known to you."

"I have seen you, Mr. Shaw. You are a rather noted character."

Bob bowed his acknowledgments of the somewhat equivocal compliment.

"My daughter," resumed the lady, raising her brilliant eyes to the young man's face, "has seen fit to withdraw herself from my protection. It is well known whose protection she sought, but we don't propose other than legal means of redress."

"I ran away from you," said Miss, "because you and that man (pointing scornfully to Waters), wanted to put me in a Magdalen Asylum. I heard you talk when you thought you was alone."

"You should know, my daughter, that I have no power to put you in any kind of asylum. When young girls are bad the judge decides what to do with them."

A flush spread over the child's dark face as she stepped closer to the woman.

"You know I am not bad. You know you wanted to make me bad that you might get rid of me and steal all my father's money. You know, too," she added in a whisper, "that you are not my mother."

"Unfortunately," returned Mrs. Smith, replying to the first clause in Miss's indictment, "your conduct proves that you need a little restraint. You are a little too old to place yourself under the protection of a young man without injury to your character."

"Madam," said Bob, hotly, "that cock won't fight. Miss didn't go to Mr. Gray. She was going back to Red Mountain, when by chance I met her. She told me something of her story, and I advised her to go to my father, who is a lawyer. She went and found Mr. Gray. The next day she came to my father's house, and has lived there since under the protection of my sister."

Mrs. Smith smiled, not compassionately exactly, but with an expression which implied that she knew how such affairs were managed to preserve an appearance of decency."

"I hope, madam," said Bob, "that you don't doubt my word?"

"Not in the least. What you say is doubtless true. Mr. Gray is a very proper young gentleman and knows the world. He would not injure his reputation by appearing as the seducer of a child."

Bob looked at the woman a moment and then turned abruptly to Waters, who stood a silent spectator of the scene.

"Will you be kind enough to repeat those words," he said, with the utmost politeness.

"It isn't my funeral," growled Waters. "Let the girl go to hell if she wants to."

"Miss," said Bob, "a fellow can't fight a woman nor a coward. Let's go home."

"Take a good look at him," said Miss, indicating Waters as the person to whom the pronoun referred.

"Know him when I see him. Happy to meet you, Mr. Waters, if you'd only set the hour. Good night, madam."

"Good night, Mr. Shaw."

Miss once more approached Mrs. Smith. "Better leave the country," she said; "I've got my mother's picture."

Without waiting to see the effect of this shot, the young girl darted out of the room.

"You was right, Miss; that cove is a coward, He won't come fooling round our office any more."

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE FIGURE-HEAD DISAPPEARS.

Mr Shaw came into Mr. Gray's office, the next morning, at the usual hour. He seated himself in an easy chair, and began looking over the papers relating to the day's business. He looked weary and depressed. His favorite tonic had failed to impart the accustomed stimulus. Mr. Gray explained the details of an important case which was to be called that morning. The senior partner failed to grasp the points with his usual vigor and clearness. He fumbled the papers purposelessly, examining them with his eye, but not with his mind. Once or twice he turned helplessly to his junior, as if beseeching his forbearance.

"You are not well this morning, Mr. Shaw," said the junior, observing the vacant expression of his senior's eyes.

"Not quite in my usual tone this morning," answered Mr. Shaw, making an effort to rouse himself. "May I trouble you to go over these again?"

Mr. Gray attempted to do so, but he saw that his senior's mind failed to follow him.

"Perhaps you'd better return home, Mr. Shaw. I can manage this case."

"Yes," assented Mr. Shaw, "you can manage it."

He arose with an effort and looked around him. His eyes, wandering and vacant, rested at last on his companion's face.

"I'm afraid," he said, calmly, "the figure-head is about to disappear."

"You'll be better to-morrow," urged Mr. Gray. "Go home and take a little rest."

"Yes, I'll take a little rest. I feel tired. Don't you ever feel tired?"

"Sometimes. We've had a good business the last month."

"What do you do when you feel tired?"

"Take a sleep and a salt-water bath."

"Well, I'll take a long sleep. It will be nice. Does the bath ever remind you of a coffin?"

"No; I prefer a swim."

Quite without apparent cause, Mr. Shaw stepped up to his junior and grasped his hand.

"Stick to your bath, my boy; stick to your bath. Let brandy alone."

Mr. Gray became alarmed. A kind of mental super seemed to have overcome his senior. He stood erect, but the muscles of his face had relaxed and a purplish hue had set in below his eyes.

"You are really ill, Mr. Shaw. I'll call a carriage and take you home."

Mr. Shaw made a gesture of dissent.

"Wait," he said, after a moment. "I'd rather rest here. Go to rest with the harness on. Might frighten the women."

He sank wearily into a chair. Mr. Gray dispatched one note to the judge asking a postponement of the case on account of the sudden and serious illness of Mr. Shaw, and another summoning Mr. Shaw, physician.

"A little brandy, Mr. Gray. Half a tumbler full." Mr. Gray procured the liquor and held it to his senior's lips. The latter drank it as if it had been water—or rather as another would have drunk water.

The liquor had a reviving effect.

"Can't keep up the fight much longer," he said. "Brandy is to the system what a mortgage is to property. Gives relief, but interest has to be paid. Interest accumulates and eats up the property. Have to settle sometime. My time has come."

Mr. Gray could not combat this reasoning.

"Best to face the music," continued Mr. Shaw. "I have no fear of dying, but my family—poor Regie, and—my wife."

"You have many years yet," said the other. "A week's rest will set you on your feet again."

Mr. Shaw shook his head.

"Doctor told me I'd go off quick, some day. What day of the month is this?"

"The twentieth of November."

Mr. Shaw was silent a moment. Then he muttered, as if speaking to himself:

"Died suddenly, on the twentieth of November, Reuben Shaw, a distinguished member of the San Francisco Bar, of—of—of—"

He hesitated, and Mr. Gray bent his head to catch his words.

"Let us call it heart disease. Somehow people never die of too much brandy."

He smiled faintly at this poor satire, and made a motion to take his companion's hand. After a moment he continued:

"Deceased enjoyed a lucrative practice, but was liberal to a fault, and died, leaving a destitute family. Isn't that the way they do it?"

Hoping to preserve life until the arrival of the physician, Mr. Gray gave the sick man another glass of brandy. He drank it as he had drunk everything that approached his lips, and for a moment the progress of death was stayed.

Mr. Shaw continued his own obituary:

"The last moments of Mr. Shaw's life were marked by an act of characteristic liberality. He bequeathed his destitute family to his associate and partner for support."

The dying man raised his eyes in which a twinkle of humor gave a certain pathos to their beseeching regard, and fixed them on his associate's face.

"Your family shall be taken care of," censured Mr. Gary. "I promise you that."

## CHAPTER XXI.

### MRS. SMITH VISITS HER LAWYER AND RECEIVES

#### SOME ADVICE.

Mrs. Smith sat as if transfixed a moment after Elias and her champion left the room. Rousing herself at last she turned to her companion.

"Did you hear what that wretch whispered to me?"

"No," growled Waters.

"She says she has the picture of her mother."

"Spouse she has. It must have been taken twelve years ago."

"Still," pursued the lady, "it will be an ugly bit of evidence."

"Hopps will get over that. We've other things to think about. I can't stay here."

"There is no reason why you should. You have done nothing since you have been here."

The uncertain, hesitating look which Miss had once seen in the man's eyes came into them again.

"Luck is against us," he said, with a deprecatory glance at his companion, as if doubtful how his excuse would be received.

"Luck! You are an idiot."

"It's all very well for them who risks nothing to talk. It isn't your neck that is in danger."

The lady leaned back in her chair, and coolly surveyed her companion. Her gaze was pitiful and contemptuous.

"James, you have lost your nerve. Go into the country where you will be safe, and—stay there."

"What will you do?"

"Fight to the end. Mr. Gray has obtained a certain advantage over us, but I am not yet done with him. I'll have what I went for, or—"

"What?"

"Threats accomplish nothing. To a woman of resources—that is to a woman like me, there are two ways to reach one end. One way has failed. I'll take the other."

"It's best to have one thing understood. You can't succeed without me."

"I don't propose to try. I simply give you leave of absence."

"And when you want me—"

"I will send for you."

"Perhaps you'll forget to send."

"Perhaps I shall."

"Still I shall come. Don't have any doubts about that."

"Well, come."

Early the next morning Waters put on his disguise and took the steamer for Napa.

Mrs. Smith made an elaborate toilet, and at ten presented herself at the office of her legal adviser.

Mr. Hopps has yet only been incidentally introduced. He is worthy of a presentation on his own account.

"Knew you would. Never was deceived in a face. It's a heavy burden, but—but—they've no—ole else."

The noble head inclined forward as if weary of its own weight. The voice that multitudes had hushed to hear was heard no more on earth.

The note announcing Mr. Shaw's illness was placed in the hands of the judge at a quarter past ten. Precisely at a quarter of eleven the same judge was informed of Mr. Shaw's death. The usual motion to adjourn was made, introduced by an eloquent tribute to the character of the deceased. Every one was surprised. Mr. Shaw had addressed the court eloquently the day before, in the screaming enjoyment of robust health. Death came with slight warning. The laws that govern life were inscrutable. A healthful man in the prime of manhood ought not to pass thus quickly from the scenes of his usefulness to the silent tomb. It seemed like an arbitrary exercise of power on the part of Providence. Why take him and spare another?

The family physician alone was not surprised. His prediction was fulfilled, his judgment proved correct. He had warned the deceased but the deceased had not heeded his warning.

The daily papers came out with wise editorials in which Providence, climatic influences and excessive mental labor were strangely blended. Sudden death was ascribed primarily to the inscrutable workings of Providence. This concession made to pious readers, the same writer searched for a natural cause and found it in the unusual amount of electricity in the atmosphere and in the effect of constant mental excitement. Professional men were advised to take more relaxation, business men to give fewer hours to money-making, working men to increase the number of their holidays. The dead man's imaginary enemies were soundly berated; his real enemy got off scot free.

When the press had had its say, the clergy took up the theme. They saw the hand of God more visibly. They interpreted the purpose of God more confidently. A striking example was needed to remind men that God ruled over them. The present generation lived too unmindful of that great fact. They lived without thought of the future. They lived as if they were masters of life and death. God had taken a chief from among them to recall the rank and file to a sense of their dependence. He had selected a man of commanding intellect and stalwart frame that the act might be more conspicuous. Such exercise of power was sometimes needed. He who gave life had a right to take life without being questioned why he did thus and so. A few words of consolation were offered the widow and orphans. They were invited to find wisdom in the act that left them without their natural protector. The blessings of martyrdom were pointed out. Whom God loveth He chasteneth. Let the bereaved therefore come to Him. He would give them rest.

Mr. Gray read these wise editorials and listened to these pious exhortations with an impatience not unmingled with contempt. He knew that Mr. Shaw died of too much brandy. He knew that, barring accidents, Mr. Shaw might have lived fifteen years longer, with a chance of twenty-five, if he had had the firmness to control his appetite. This charging God with the sins of a man seemed a kind of impiety.

At first glance the man was not prepossessing. He was tall, with a short body, long thin legs, long arms and large hands. His shoulders were stooping, his chest flat, and as he sat doubled up in his office chair, should his face by chance be covered, he might be taken for the missing link in the Darwinian theory. His face redeemed him. If not handsome it was respectable, and denoted great mental power. His forehead was broad, and jutted out over clear, steady gray eyes, giving evidence of physical nerve and large perceptive organs. His nose was large and broad at the base, his mouth stern, his whole face resolute and intelligent.

Mr. Smith was too good a judge of men to form any design upon this man, out from instinct and habit she played the artillery of her charms on all she met. Her tone as she addressed him was low and musical, her glance soft, her smile as sweet as that of a siren.

"Well," he said, with a touch of impatience in his tone, "has anything happened?"

"Miss called upon me last evening."

"Have the Shaws thrown her off?"

"No; she was accompanied by a member of the Shaw family—a particular friend of yours, I believe—Mr. Robert Shaw."

"Proceed, madam. What was the purpose of her visit?"

"In part to inform me that she has her mother's picture."

"Indeed! Then she acted without Shaw's advice in this case?"

"Probably. Lawyers, I believe, do not give their opponents points."

"Not real ones. You believe then that she has her mother's picture?"

"I think she may have."

Mr. Hopps made a note of the intelligence, and then turned to the lady.

"You said the object of her visit was in part to inform you that she had her mother's picture. What was the other 'in part'?"

"To see and have her companion see the gentleman you know as Mr. Smith."

"I understand. The girl is not a fool. She knows that he is the man who killed Mesnagley."

"Yes," said the lady.

"Is there any other reason why she should wish to have young Mr. Shaw to see Mr. Smith?"

"There may be."

"Madam, I have always told you to keep nothing from me. What is this reason?"

"She fancies Mr. Smith has designs on the life of Mr. Gray."

"What foundation is there for this suspicion?"

"I suppose I must tell you the facts?"

"If you have killed Mr. Gray, you must tell me."

"Well, Mr. Smith did visit Mr. Gray's office with intent to kill him."

The lawyer darted a savage look upon his fair client.

"Did you sanction such a step without consulting me?"

"I did not sanction it. I did not know the attempt was to be made until it had failed."

"Relate the circumstances."

"It is Mr. Gray's habit to remain in his office until six o'clock, when he goes to dinner. From five to six he is usually alone. Mr. Smith entered the outer office and closed the door. He then concealed himself, intending to attack Mr. Gray when he should come out of his private office."

"Well; he did not attack him?"

"No; when the door opened a very beautiful young lady stepped out in advance."

"A very beautiful young lady! And she had been with Mr. Gray—how long?"

"At least an hour."

"Do you know who this young lady was?"

"It was Miss Reginia Shaw."

A slight flush swept up the face of the lawyer, but he simply said:

"Proceed."

"They found the door closed and locked. Mr. Gray hurried his companion back to the private office and closed the door. The movement was so quick that Mr. Smith had not time to recover from his surprise."

He reflected that now his presence was suspected; it would be a fight in the dark in which the chances would be even. Thus reflecting he withdrew while Mr. Gray and Miss Shaw were in the private office."

"That is the only wise act that idiot ever committed. Where is he now?"

"Gone into the country."

"You will write to him, I presume?"

"If I have occasion."

"Write and advise him to hang himself. We cannot be compromised by such machinations as he."

"I will," said the lady.

"Have you reason to believe that Mr. Gray suspects who was lying in wait?"

"Miss suspects. She accused him openly last night."

"But there is no proof?"

"None, whatever."

"Good. They may suspect what they please. If they had caught him, or seen him, our case would be ruined."

"Not by any means."

"Perhaps you are a better judge than I."

"In this matter, yes. Mr. Smith is my husband. Miss is my daughter. Mr. Gray has seduced my daughter from her home."

"We have no proof of that."

"We have. But if we had not we have a right to assume the fact since she now lives under his protection."

"And you assume also the right of a step-father to kill the seducer of his step-daughter."

"If he has not the right no California jury would punish him for so doing."

The lawyer shook his head.

"When you women take the lead in these matters, you fix your eyes only on a certain point. You do not properly survey the field. What evidence have you that Mr. Gray has seduced your daughter?"

"I can prove at least that he held her on his lap with his arm around her waist."

"Pooh! A child of twelve! and Mr. Gray had been her teacher, her friend, almost her father, Madam."

you must leave the direction of the case to me, or take it to some lawyer who would be fool enough to let you have your own way."

"I leave it to you. I have the utmost confidence in your integrity and in your judgment. Still if it can be shown that Mr. Gray's relations with my daughter—"

"If it can be shown. There is where the trouble comes. In the absence of positive proof the presumption is all against you. Mr. Gray has the reputation of being an irreproachable man. He has the look of a man, and no one will believe him guilty of such baseness without positive proof."

"But with proof—positive proof—"

"Madam, prove that the moon is made of green cheese, and our ideas of astronomy must give way to a fact demonstrated."

"Well, you shall have the proof you require."

At this moment the office boy burst into the room with the news of Mr. Shaw's death.

"Fortune favors us," said Mr. Hopps. "Mr. Shaw was a great lawyer—when he was sober."

"How very sudden," said the lady, turning pale; "as he subject to any disease?"

"Yes—brandy."

Mr. Smith soon took her departure. The thought of death descending in that irregular way stirred a conscience not very clear. She resolved to attend church the next Sunday—unless it should rain."

"Mr. Hopps was left alone. He took five of his busy minutes for reflection. The object of his thoughts was not Mr. Shaw, his old partner, who had been to him a friend and benefactor, but Mr. Shaw's daughter, now fatherless, penniless, and powerless."

"Gray cannot sustain himself," reasoned the more experienced lawyer; "he is simply a good clerk. Suppose she loves him? He has nothing to offer. Alone in his office at least an hour! She never visited me. Fortune favors me at last. Brandy, I thank thee. Thou art the only agent of suicide that bringeth no disgrace."

## CHAPTER XXII.

SHAW & CO.

Mr. Shaw died intestate. No man had a better reason for neglecting to express his last wishes in writing. He had literally nothing to will away. His law library was encumbered with a chattel mortgage, and his household furniture had always belonged to his wife. This was all she could call her own. Reginia had her rich wardrobe and some costly jewelry. Bob carried his worldly possessions wherever he went. There was some money due the firm, enough, if all could be collected, to pay the incumbrance on the library.

Mrs. Shaw was bowed to the earth in grief. She had loved her husband as well as her rather shall w nature could love any one. She loved the distinction his name conferred upon her, the luxu-

ry his labor provided. But her widowhood was the more inconsolable from the circumstances of his death. He had lived without religion, and died without the benefit of clergy. God certainly had dealt hardly with her and hers.

Mr. Gray was then ready for an interview with Miss Shaw. The role of benefactor was one that neither could tolerate. He divined himself of this at the outset. He realized himself and made Miss Shaw comprehend that his success in his profession was due far more to his connection with Mr. Shaw than to his own ability. Men with equal talent and application fought for years to obtain the recognition he had obtained in months. The reputation and associations of Mr. Shaw were greater elements of success than even intelligent labor, since thousands were willing to labor, while few could avail themselves of such a reputation and such associates. It followed, therefore, that that which had been Mr. Shaw's now belonged to Mr. Shaw's family. Death had not dissolved the firm, and Mr. Gray frankly confessed that if Miss Shaw or her mother choose to dissolve it he would be the greater loser.

Miss Shaw listened to this statement of the case with something of the surprise she would have experienced if informed that she had inherited a fortune from some person she had never heard of. Her surprise was the more agreeable as she recognized the absolute justice of his position. She could see exactly how Mr. Gray had been benefited by Mr. Shaw, and it was but right that that benefit should be returned in some form to Mr. Shaw's family. It was true, if Mr. Gray had not been a man of ability and capacity to labor, Mr. Shaw's name and reputation would not have insured the degree of success that had attended their associations; but it was also true that if Mr. Gray had not possessed ability and capacity to labor, Mr. Shaw would not have received an equivalent for the interest he gave in his name and reputation. The associations were mutually advantageous, and it was but just that its advantages should be shared by both.

The young lady was relieved, therefore, from any sense of dependence. It was a pleasant surprise to find her interests and that of her mother so carefully watched over by a comparative stranger, and she regarded the act as she would if some stranger had come to her and said:

"Miss Shaw, I have a large sum of money in my hands that justly belongs to you. The proofs of ownership are destroyed, but I know this money is yours. Permit me, therefore, to bring you what is your due." The act would be one of simple honesty. And surely, honest men were not so rare.

We have inflicted these tedious details on the reader, not for the purpose of exalting Mr. Gray in the reader's estimation, but that Miss Shaw's position might be understood. If that young lady had accepted a portion of Mr. Gray's professional earnings simply because she was deprived of other resources by the death of her father, her independence would have been compromised, and a basis laid for the cruel surmises to which ill-natured people afterward gave currency. But in the estimation of neither was there any dependence. Mr. Gray, as a matter of strict justice,

admitted the right of Mr. Shaw's family to a share in the professional income of the law firm of Shaw & Co., and the family, likewise admitting the justice of the arrangement, accepted the share to which it was mutually admitted that they were entitled.

Miss Shaw was greatly relieved at the turn affairs had taken. She had an elegant woman's dread of poverty and toil. She was a thorough woman in her willingness to surrender to men the avocations of life if in turn men would surround her with the proceeds. All the interest in labor she wanted was its results. Men might be lawyers, doctors, clergymen, and congressmen and enjoy all the distinction such position confer, if the proceeds were shared by their wives and daughters. Experience had not yet brought her in contact with the millions of her sex who are in effect neither wives nor daughters.

Mrs. Shaw was not disposed to examine too closely the means by which she was enabled to maintain her position in her church and in society. Mr. Gray said it was right, and as Mr. Shaw's successor he ought to know. She admitted it was rather handsome in him, and then dismissed the subject from her mind.

Miss continued to reside in Mrs. Shaw's family. This period of her life had minor annoyances, but on the whole was pleasant. She improved rapidly under Miss Shaw's tutelage in accomplishments and deportment. She mastered her studies with singular facility. She learned also to control her temper, and to be less ardent in her likes and dislikes.

One of her little annoyances was Bob Shaw. Bob persisted in treating her as if she was a child, and this she resented. In punishment she never permitted him to establish other than friendly relations. She repelled his caresses, and utterly denied the right he advanced to greet her with a brotherly kiss. This attitude only increased the ardor of his pursuit. He approached her in every conceivable way. Sometimes he would be submissive and almost gentle for a week at a time, and beg as a reward the favor of a kiss. Feeling that gentleness and devotion received no reward, he would change his tactics. For days together neither Miss Shaw nor Miss would see him. The newspapers would perhaps record a desperate fight in which generally Bob Shaw's name figured with unpleasant conspicuousness. Then the young scapegrace would return, looking the worse for wear, but in high spirits and full of reckless fun. But Miss never expressed regret for his absence nor pleasure at his return. She took perhaps too much pains to convince him that he was nothing to her. He might hang himself if he chose, or get killed in one of his hoodlum fights, for all she cared, as she told him one day when he was pleading for some manifestation of affection.

Another little annoyance was the frequent visits of the Rev. Dr. Fox. This gentleman was her second McSnagley. She did not hate so fiercely now as then, but she was still a pretty good hater. Her hatred generally went out to those who blundered in the effort to do her a kindness. She had hated McSnagley because he sought to impress upon her mind the unpleasant fact that she was more wicked than other girls, and that God hated her for being wicked. McSnagley meant well, but intention Miss did not take

into consideration. She now hated Dr. Fox in a milder way because Dr. Fox was trying to save her soul.

Dr. Fox was not in the least like McSnagley. The latter was a rude, uncultured man, preaching the gospel as he understood it, while the former was a polished and cultured gentleman, preaching the gospel as his people understood it. The former barely kept himself alive by his labors, while the latter realized a princely income. The former was uncouth of speech and offensive in manner while the latter spoke in low, modulated tones, and was always courteous and deferential. There was, in fact, no seeming point of resemblance between the two, yet the wayward Miss persisted in ascribing to her new acquaintance the attributes of her old enemy.

Dr. Fox had undertaken the arduous task of saving Miss's soul at Mrs. Shaw's earnest request. The death of her husband had made that good lady extremely sensitive on subjects pertaining to religion, and she ambitiously aimed to convert the whole family. Dr. Fox accepted the mission the more readily, as he had a weakness for saving the souls of conspicuous sinners. We regret to add that he did not meet with brilliant success. Regina listened to his exhortations with ill-concealed impatience, but was too thoroughly the young lady to be inattentive. Miss asked him all sorts of impertinent questions, and insisted upon straightforward answers. It was from Bob, however, that the Rev. Dr. Fox received his most severe rebuff. We cannot give his language in words, but if our readers will bear in mind the probable destination of Mr. Robert Shaw according to evangelical creeds, they may form a tolerably correct idea of the substance of his remark when informed that the probability of a future meeting between Dr. Fox and himself was therein embraced.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### MRS. SMITH BECOMES A CHRISTIAN.

Mr. Hopp had waited from day to day for signs of distress to appear at the Shaw family mansion. He had driven past the house every morning, expecting to see the red flag that so often signals a change of residence.

But the signals did not appear; the red flag did not flutter in the morning breeze. Everything seemed serene. The little engrossed billboards, on which were written the ominous words, "Reuben Shaw, Dr., etc., etc.," were less numerous than formerly. In time they disappeared entirely. The Shaw family had no debts. The Shaw family might have no income, but they lived handsomely, and owed nobody. Mr. Hopp was mystified. He admitted that Mr. Gray had succeeded better than he anticipated, but this success was but remotely connected

with the prosperity of the Shaw family. His code of morals did not comprehend the terms of copartnership by which the family of a deceased partner were entitled to a share in the profits of a firm, the chief of which was dead. If Mr. Gray assumed the debts, nothing more could be required of him.

In time Mr. Hopp came to the conclusion that Mr. Gray was a suitor for Miss Shaw's hand. There was nothing to warrant the conclusion except the presumption that they derived their income from him. Mr. Gray did not mingle in society, and was never seen in attendance on Miss Shaw. His calls at the house were few and brief.

Mr. Hopp was mystified. The subject engrossed his thoughts to the detriment of business. He was a man who had never failed to accomplish a business on which he had set his mind. He was thirty-eight years of age, and had never failed in his life. Now, at this mature age, with wealth and position at his back, he had set his heart on this penniless girl of eighteen and the way to success was not open.

Mrs. Smith failed to fulfill her threat of going to church next Sunday. By chance she became one of Dr. Fox's fashionable congregation. It was a good church to be seen at. Only the world's elect could afford to attend. Dr. Fox was a smooth, easy, florid speaker. As a rule he made things pretty easy for his congregation. Religion was not austere nor self-denying. It was essential to salvation, but its profession entailed no duties that a good citizen did not owe to the world. People might profess religion and yet make and enjoy money. He required no one to sell his goods and give the proceeds to the poor. Dr. Fox never preached from such old-fashioned texts. He had goods himself. He bought and sold, and put the profits in the bank. He lived luxuriously, kept fast horses, entertained handsomely—in a word, enjoyed life like any other gentleman of means and cultivated tastes. Dr. Fox's sermon convinced Mrs. Smith of the propriety of joining his church. Hitherto she had rather neglected religion. A slight exercise of memory recalled a period in her life when the observation even of the easy rules laid down by Dr. Fox would have been inconvenient. But her future was brighter. She had determined to follow Mr. Hopp's advice, and pursue her ends through means that were lawful. It was safer, and, perhaps, after all, surer. It was certainly more respectable, and the lady was suddenly seized with a longing to be respectable.

This longing had perhaps the charm of novelty, but it was not the less agreeable in consequence. She was a woman for whom life had few surprises in store, and this new desire came just in time. It gave her something to think of, something to do. Old associations must be broken, new ones formed. She would act henceforth on a different plan.

Regina was more self-reliant. Her love for her father was of that character which could not recognize defects in the object loved. Her father was the noblest, best, and most honorable gentleman in Christendom. She had only seen the bright side of his character. He had been

the kindest and most indulgent of fathers. She could not recall a cross word or a severe reprimand.

Miss Shaw's grief did not deprive her of her senses. She knew that she was poor—she realized that her old life was ended. Her place in society must be given up. The great question now was, how to live comfortably.

But days passed, and the change she anticipated, and to which she was resigned, did not take place. Everything went on as before. No hard-hearted landlord came to inquire about rent—no bills were left at her door. The servants received their monthly wages, and were as obedient to her command as ever.

But this could not last. She waited for the change to offer itself, because she had not been in the habit of directing affairs herself, and she thought it would come when it must.

Mr. Gray called occasionally, but avoided business topics. Once when she intimated that she would like to consult with him in regard to some plan for the future, he replied that she need not trouble herself to form plans at present. If the necessity ever came he would let her know.

"But Mr. Gray," she remonstrated; "you know this cannot last."

"I do not know if it can," he replied, "but if it cannot I shall soon know."

Mr. Gray answered truly; he did not know. It was impossible to tell to what extent the death of Mr. Shaw would affect the business of the firm. He himself had little reputation. He had had little experience. Great lawyers are not born; they make themselves. Mr. Gray was not a genius, but he had a clear, acute mind, a cool temperament, and great force of character. His success thus far might justly be ascribed to Mr. Shaw's directing intelligence. It was impossible to tell how far he could be trusted alone.

But two or three eminent lawyers—friends of Mr. Shaw—stood by him like men. They offered their service in the conduct of some important cases, and advised him freely at all times, even to the neglect of their own practice. They sent him clients and spoke of him as the rising man of the day.

Owing, perhaps, to their representations, Mr. Gray's first appearance in court in charge of a civil case of some moment attracted general attention. Aware of its importance to himself, and those depending upon him, he bestowed upon it unusual care, consulted freely with the best legal minds in the city, and went into court better prepared in his part. His cool temperament was an element in his favor. The hush of a crowded court-room did not awe him in the least. The consciousness that veterans in the profession were listening to his argument did not inspire dread, as minds of equal calibre and experience had assisted him to make his position impregnable. In his speech he avoided dramatic effects, but aimed at conciseness of style, solidity rather than show. In these respects, for a young lawyer, the speech was remarkable. If it inspired spectators less favorably, it secured the favor of the court and veteran practitioners. He won the case as he had fully expected, since he had by far the strongest side, but he won something more—position in his profession. He returned that night as secure of the future as if his fortune had been in United States bonds. Nothing but neglect of business or abuse of his own powers could prevent his success.

For some weeks Mrs. Smith was a regular attendant at Dr. Fox's church. She secured a seat in a conspicuous row, where she could hardly fail to catch the preacher's eye. She did catch his eye. An occult intelligence seemed to exist between them. From the time he first met her soft, upturned gaze, her pensive and beautiful countenance suffused with a holy rapture, he preached to her rather than to his congregation. The appreciation he read in her face was sweet to his soul. He beheld a new worshiper, a woman of evident intelligence, ardent, sympathetic and admiring. Who could she be?

The question was solved. Mrs. Smith called upon the pastor at the right time. His interest was aroused, his curiosity excited. He received her with the warm cordiality which distinguished his manner. He gently pressed her exquisitely-gloved hand, assisted her to a seat, and thanked her for the honor of her call.

Mrs. Smith affected a charming modesty. She had ventured to call after much hesitation, painfully impressed with a sense of her unworthiness, but impelled by a newly-awakened consciousness of the peril she was in. She had lived a worldly life, but it had pleased God to give her time for repentance. She alluded in graceful terms to the passages in his sermons which had particularly impressed her, and to other passages which had inspired her with courage to seek a private interview with him who had been God's chosen agent in her soul's salvation.

Dr. Fox replied in a manner to remove her fears. He could not imagine his visitor a sinner, except in the general sense which included all mankind. But it was one of the beauties of the Gospel that it offered free pardon to sinners who repent. It was never too late, and never too early. The awakening of the soul should never be resisted. Happy were they who were called in the springtime of youth, when the charms of the world were still sweet and fresh. Such were the chosen of God. A suspicion might attach to those who waited until old age and decrepitude robbed life of its attractions, but to those who sought Jesus in their youth and beauty there was awaiting a double reward.

Mrs. Smith listened with half-concealed rapture. A weight seemed lifted from her mind. The brilliancy of her eyes was veiled in grateful tears. A rosy glow overspread her usually pale face. She leaned toward her beloved pastor, and seemed to drink in his very words. In the nervous transport that seized her, her warm hands came in contact with his. They were held in a fatherly grasp. He called her his child. He soothed her perturbed mind with gentle and consoling words. He took it upon himself to assure her of forgiveness for whatever errors she might have committed. Let her confide in him. The confidence would be bold sacred.

Then Mrs. Smith told a story of her life. She had been married when a mere child to a man much older than herself. She had never loved this man. She had tried, however, to perform a wife's duty. A child had been born which had filled the void in her heart. Oh how she had loved that child! But this happiness was denied her. Her husband was dissolute, profane, and brutal. She had not then given heed to the beautiful injunction of the marriage ceremony. This

was one of the sins she had to answer for. Poor, friendless, unable to support the child, she had consented that it should remain with her husband. Her life since had been checkered. Necessity had compelled her to adopt pursuits repugnant to her nature. She had lived, however, without great sin until she heard of the death of her husband. Her heart prompted her to fly to her orphan child. She found to her surprise that her husband had died rich, that her daughter was an heiress. But here came the cruellest blow of all. Her daughter refused to believe that she was her mother. The child had been badly trained, and had evil counselors, but it was a terrible blow for a mother to bear.

Dr. Fox was much affected.

"May I ask," he said, "if your daughter is with you now?"

"O, no. If she was—if I had her with me—I would win her love. But the evil counselors of whom I spoke have enticed her away."

"But surely the law will give you possession of your child."

"The law!—the cruel law! It is the law that has taken her from me. You, my only friend, may have seen the child. You may have heard the other side of the story."

"What is your daughter's name?"

"Melissa Smith."

Dr. Fox looked surprised. He had seen the child. He had heard the other side of the case. He had formed a very different idea of the mother from that he had formed of his visitor.

"It is your daughter, then, who lives in the family of Mrs. Shaw?"

"Alas, yes."

"Mrs. Shaw is a most estimable lady. She will sanction nothing that is wrong. Has she heard your story?"

"How can I approach her? Her husband was my daughter's counselor. Her husband's partner is the man who enticed my daughter from her home."

"Enticed her from her home! You do not mean, my dear madam, that Mr. Shaw's partner exercised an improper influence over the child?"

"I mean that she was living with me contentedly, and, as I thought, happily. One day she disappeared. I caused a search to be made for her, and ascertained to my grief and shame that she was living under Mr. Gray's protection."

"But, madam, she is yet a child. You don't mean—"

"I desire not to be uncharitable. I once believed Mr. Gray to be the soul of honor. He was kind to Miss when she had no one else to be kind to her. She is of an ardent nature, and loves or hates with her whole soul. She worships Mr. Gray. She would follow him to the grave or to shame."

"But it seems to me that Mr. Gray has acted very honorably. He placed her with a family that is beyond reproach."

Mrs. Smith smiled. She inclined to the worthy clergyman, and unconsciously, perhaps, laid her hand on his.

"Mr. Gray," she said, "is a rising young man. He has talent and is ambitious. Do you suppose he would sacrifice his prospects in life by openly com-

mitting an act that would excite the horror even of his worldly associates?"

Dr. Fox wiped the perspiration from his brow. The affair began to appear in a new light. Mrs. Smith's suspicions might prove correct. Miss had not impressed him favorably. She had not paid that respect to his opinions that other young girls paid. She had questioned him in regard to matters that others take for granted, and argued like a lawyer. She was willful, irreverent, and impertinent.

"It is your opinion, then," he said, "that Mrs. Shaw is misled in regard to the relations existing between Mr. Gray and his ward?"

"O, certainly. Mrs. Shaw is too good to be suspicious. She could not suspect such business. And then Mr. Gray has been of great service to the family."

"I must inquire into this," replied Dr. Fox. "The hospitality of my friend, Mrs. Shaw, must not be abused."

"O, if you will!" exclaimed the lady. "A word from you will do so much. I am a stranger to you, and I cannot expect my statement to be taken with the implicit confidence you might give it if we were better acquainted. But if you will question my daughter or Mr. Gray, you will discover something which will enable a man of your discernment to form a correct conclusion."

"Doubtless, madam; but don't regard yourself as a stranger to me. It is one of the greatest pleasures of my profession to regard all as friends who come in the name of Jesus."

"Heaven sent me to you, I am sure," murmured the lady. "Your friendship fills my heart with gladness. But I have already detained you too long. Your time is not your own."

"I shall always be happy to see you, Mrs. Smith. Call if you can in three days and I may have news from your daughter."

Mrs. Smith returned to the Lick House where she now resided. She was pleased with her afternoon's work. Her experienced eye measured Dr. Fox at a glance. Not a bad man, but vain, shallow, self-conceited and sensual, following his profession rather for the opportunities it afforded than from any desire to benefit the human family. His vanity she could play upon, his self-conceit she could humor, while his temperament exposed him to the blandishments of the first beautiful and unscrupulous woman he might meet. Throned as she knew him to be in the Shaw family, he was a powerful ally.

"Ah, Mr. Gray," she said to herself, "you did me but half justice when you taunted me with having one man at my service. I have two."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### MILISS IS HERSELF AGAIN

Dr. Fox had great confidence in his power to mould people to his will. He was persuasive, oily, and persistent. He did not purposely med-

dle in the domestic affairs of his parishioners, but somehow got mixed up in every family estrangement that occurred. Sometimes he succeeded in restoring peace, but oftener not. He could mould pliant natures, but the sterner ones baffled him.

He called upon Mrs. Shaw the next day, and after a little talk on ordinary topics, directed the conversation to Miss.

"Does Mr. Gray call often to see his ward?" he asked.

"Very seldom. He has little time for social calls. Regina, who, for a wonder, likes him very much, charges him with neglect."

"You have no means of knowing, I suppose, if Miss meets him away from home?"

"Miss is steady enough to tell when she meets him. I think the child rather likes to tease my daughter—not that there is anything between Mr. Gray and Regina, but merely for mischief."

"Miss is rather fond of him, is she not?"

"He is the only person who has the least influence over her. His wish is her law."

"Is Mr. Gray a man of sufficient character to resist the temptation such worship offers?"

"I know very little about Mr. Gray. He was my husband's protegee. He seems a very nice young man, and in money affairs is strictly honorable."

"You must know, my dear Mrs. Shaw, that the love of an ardent, trusting girl like our dear Miss, subjects the honor of a young man to a severe test. If the girl has parents, of course there is less danger; but in this case I believe she has no protector?"

"I believe not. Her mother lives somewhere, but it was shown in court that she was not a safe guardian of the child's fortune. The case comes up again before long."

"I am afraid some injustice has been done to the mother. I met her yesterday. She has the appearance of being a very respectable lady, and mourns deeply the loss of her daughter. She has applied for admission to membership in our church."

"Indeed! I thought she was a different sort of a person. Of course I know nothing about her."

"And she is concerned, moreover," added Mr. Fox, "at the intimacy which exists between her daughter and Mr. Gray."

"Mr. Gray is her daughter's counsel. He acts also as temporary guardian to take care of her property. This, I believe, is the extent of their intimacy."

"I trust so, but—but Mrs. Smith is fearful it may not be." Mrs. Shaw opened her languid eyes.

"What does Mrs. Smith fear?" she asked.

"Her fears were expressed more in looks than words. Miss is now in her fourteenth year, an age when young girls must care for their reputations."

"Certainly. But Miss is not in the least inclined to foolishness. She allows no one to take even the liberties men often take with girls of her age."

"Is she as strict with Mr. Gray?"

"I—don't know. I presume she is."

"It is intimated that she is not. I don't wish to



alarm you, but I know you are the last person to serve as a—that is—to afford protection to—"

"My dear Mr. Fox, you would not speak in this way without cause. Is it suspected that that child has been imprudent?"

"It is suspected. I regret to add that her own mother, who loves her with a mother's love, suspects her."

"This is horrible. I had no idea. And Regina going with her everywhere! What shall we do?"

"Ascertain the facts of the case. If there is guilt, neither party must find shelter beneath your roof."

"Not an hour. How do we know what has been done. Perhaps people are already talking."

"I think not. If guilty, Mr. Gray has been very circumspect."

"Circumspect! The villain! To bring his creatures here! But it seems impossible after all."

"At least, we owe it to ourselves and society to ascertain the truth. Perhaps if you should question Miss Regina—"

"I will do so. Not that Regina can know anything of this kind, but she has seen them together."

Miss Shaw was called and questioned. At first her replies were evasive. She recalled the first time she had seen Miss in Mr. Gray's office, reclining in his arms. Her pure mind had seen nothing in this but the natural manifestation of affection on the part of a child for a friend from whom she had been separated, but she shrank from mentioning the circumstance even to her mother, much less to Dr. Fox.

But the clergyman was not to be evaded. He spoke with a certain authority. Her mother requested her to answer. She must answer truthfully if at all, as the lies she told were of the whitest kind, harmless little social lies which she was sure would never rise and confront her. At last her Kentucky blood got up. She declined to answer. Dr. Fox persisted. She maintained a dignified silence. Her mother commanded her to answer. Kentucky blood flatly refused to obey.

A scene ensued. Mrs. Shaw indulged in hysterics. Miss Shaw coolly rang for the maid. In the midst of the confusion Miss entered, pale, her eyes flashing, the spirit of a devil in her face.

The girl walked right up to the Rev. Dr. Fox and shook her fist in his face.

"If I was a man," she said, in a fearfully distinct tone, "I'd thrash you. You are a meddling old fool. Do you want to know if I have kissed Mr. Gray? Yes, a thousand times, and I'll kiss him when I please. Get out."

Mr. Fox shrank back from that little fist, and with more alacrity than he would have shown if it had been a man's. The young ladies of his congregation did not indulge in that style of address.

Regina was astonished, though her Kentucky blood prompted her to take the passionate child to her heart. She advanced hastily to Miss and laid her hand on her shoulder.

"Don't, Miss, please don't."

"I wouldn't hurt him," replied the child, emphasizing the words as if it were in her power to annihilate him, if she would condescend to strike; "he isn't worth it. I never did anything I am not willing the

whole world should know, and he comes sneaking round with his nasty questions. But it was good in you not to answer," and she threw her arms around Regina's neck.

"Take the dreadful girl away," moaned Mrs. Shaw. "Don't let me see her again."

"Mother," said Regina, firmly, "you are unjust. The girl does not live less likely to disgrace herself than Miss."

"Regina, don't you defend her. She has disgraced herself already. O, what will people say?"

"I don't care," replied Kentucky blood. "And you, sir," she continued, turning to Mr. Fox, "you should be the last man to traduce an unprotected girl."

"Miss Regina," replied the clergyman, "your generous impulses carry you too far. What I have done I have done from regard to you and your family."

"And this is the thanks you get," sobbed Mrs. Shaw. "O, if my poor husband were alive!"

"If papa were alive," replied Regina, "he would not permit even a clergyman to throw suspicion on a girl living in his house. As it is," turning to Mr. Fox, "you will have to answer to Miss Smith's guardian."

"Don't speak of Mr. Gray, Regina; I forbid you to see him again. Who would have thought he could be such a villain?"

Miss could hold her peace no longer. Breaking away from Regina, she marched up to Mrs. Shaw.

"If you say Mr. Gray is a villain, I say you lie. Don't dare to say it again, or I'll—I'll kill you."

"Hush! hush! Lissy. Mamma is ill. Let us go."

As Mrs. Shaw did not repeat the offensive words, Miss suffered herself to be drawn away. Mrs. Shaw and Mr. Fox were alone together.

"I think we need no farther evidence," observed the clergyman; "who ever heard such language from a child?"

"How shamefully we have been imposed upon. But for you, Mr. Fox, we might never have discovered what a character we have in the house."

Mr. Fox was not in a humor for congratulations. He was not proud of his afternoon's work. His knowledge of character inclined him to regard the outburst of passion on the part of Miss as the expression of an innocent heart. But he had gone too far to retract. To vindicate his own action he must make out a case against Miss.

"Of course," he said, "you will require her guardian to take her away."

"Certainly. Without an hour's delay. May I trouble you to ring the bell?"

Dr. Fox rang the bell.

This time a servant answered. She was dispatched to Mr. Gray's office with a request that he would call upon Mrs. Shaw without delay.

In half an hour the servant returned with the intelligence that Mr. Gray was in Alameda county attending court, and was not expected back until the last evening boat.

"In that case," said Mr. Fox, "Miss Smith must remain until morning. If it would be of any service I will call to-morrow."

"Thank you; if you will be so kind. I have no one now to depend upon."

## CHAPTER XXV.

NOT SO BAD AS IT SEEMS.

Mr. Gray, happily unconscious of what was transpiring in the usual peaceful home of the Shaw family, returned in a late Oakland boat and proceeded at once to his hotel. He had had hard day and was fatigued in body and mind. He ate a light supper and a little past midnight repaired to his room. A cigar and a novel whiled away an hour, and he was preparing to retire when a loud rap sounded on the door. A message had come for him from Miss Shaw. Would he please come at once.

As Miss Shaw was not a young lady who would be likely to send such a message without cause he hastily descended to the street, threw himself in a coat at the door and gave the driver the place of his destination.

Lights were gleaming in every window of the Shaw mansion when his coach stopped at the door. The front door was open, and Regina herself in a loose wrapper, pale and terrified, was waiting in the hall.

She came forward as he entered, and the look of horror on her face alarmed even him. The sight of expected relief often unnerves a system strung to the highest tension. Men who have faced death calmly, tremble when the danger is past. It was so now with Miss Shaw. As she approached Mr. Gray a trembling seized her limbs, her head became dizzy, and her sight dim, and she would have fallen at his feet had he not caught her in his arms.

The young man carried her to a chair, and placing her thereon, supported her with his arm—fanning her with the first thing he could lay his hands on. Something terrible must have happened to affect her thus, he thought.

In time she began to revive. "O!" she murmured "my poor brother, my poor brother."

"What has happened?" asked Mr. Gray.

It was by question and more or less incoherent replies that Mr. Gray learned that Robert Shaw was lying up stairs severely wounded and that Miss was the person who had inflicted the wounds. The circumstances of the affair were still unknown, except that Robert had come home late, under the influence of liquor, that through accident or design he had entered the room where Miss was sleeping, that the girl, possibly mistaking him for a robber, had seized a knife and in the dark inflicted wounds of such a severe nature that the young man had fainted from loss of blood.

This was Regina's interpretation of the affair. A darker suspicion formed in Mr. Gray's mind than her words seemed to sanction. Robert was insane in his cups. Reckless at all times, no law of God or man restrained him when excited by liquor. Might not his purpose, on entering the young girl's room, in the dead hour of night, be more guilty than if he had been in fact a robber.

The clergyman took his departure. Soon after Regina descended to the sitting-room.

"Do you know, mother, that you have mortally offended Mr. Gray?"

"Who is Mr. Gray that he should be considered when our honor and good name are at stake?"

"Dear mamma, are our honor and good name at stake? Can you for a moment believe this clergyman's gossip about Miss?"

"Clergyman's gossip! Regina, you shock me. Mr. Fox but hinted in the most guarded terms the charges openly preferred by the mother of Mr. Gray's protegee."

"The same woman who threatened to put Miss in a Magdalen Asylum. Did you ever hear of such a thing! Do you believe this woman can be the mother of Miss?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. I don't want to be troubled with other people's affairs."

"Then let us consider our own a little. You seem to forget that we owe to Mr. Gray's generosity our present means of support."

"I thought our income was derived from our part of the business of the firm."

"So Mr. Gray has been kind enough to represent. Perhaps, too, this representation is strictly correct. But Mr. Gray is the firm. Our family is not represented therein. If he choose, he may, without incurring the least blame, dissolve a copartnership that only involves a division of his profits, and set up business for himself. What then would become of us?"

Mrs. Shaw was sure she did not know.

"If I thought," continued Regina, "that there was the least shadow of truth in these charges I would say, let us do right, be the consequence what it may. But, mother, I know better. Miss has told me how she first became acquainted with Mr. Gray, how she went to him, a homeless vagrant, hungry, half-naked, wretched, but with a dim idea that the schoolmaster's teaching would make her better. She has told me how kindly he received her, how patient he was with her, how step by step he led her out of the path of ignorance and sin, providing her with a home when all doors were closed against the drunkard's vagrant daughter, taking her part against all and sustaining her through all. And when it was discovered that she was an heiress and her mother came to claim her, how he gave her to her mother's charge and never sought her again until Miss herself claimed his protection against an unnatural mother. I was a chance witness of their first meeting, and I know though he held her sobbing to his breast there was not a sinful thought in his heart. And now because this mother has found an advocate in Mr. Fox, you suspect such a man of a design too horrible to contemplate."

When Regina finished speaking Mrs. Shaw was weeping. Not a bad woman at heart, but weak, selfish, wholly under the influence of a man she regarded as God's representative on earth, she now became dimly conscious that she had been led into an error that might have serious results. But she had not sufficient force of character to extricate herself from her false position. She could only sob and moan and wish her husband were alive.

Regina returned to Miss. The child was still sullen and angry. She seemed to give no thought to herself only so far as the events that had occurred might affect Mr. Gray.

"Where is Miss?" Mr. Gray asked, controlling as well as possible his rising temper.

"In her room, the door locked and bolted."

"Will you remain here alone or come with me?"

"Let me go with you."

They proceeded up stairs. A surgeon was dressing Robert's wounds. Another physician was with Mrs. Shaw, who had fallen into violent hysterics.

Mr. Gray and his companion entered the chamber in which the wounded man was lying. The surgeon recognized the former.

"Is he badly hurt?" asked Mr. Gray.

"Not dangerously—if he will follow directions."

Regina uttered a sigh of relief. Bob, hearing Mr. Gray's voice opened his eyes, and made a sign for him to come nearer.

"It served me right," he said; "no business in her room. Full."

"Keep quiet. When you get well, we'll have a little talk together."

"What does he mean by 'full'?" asked Regina.

"He means that he was intoxicated."

"O!" replied the young girl, receiving this new addition to her stock of knowledge with her usual resignation.

"Remain with your brother," said Mr. Gray. "I will go to Miss."

He knocked at the young girl's door.

"Who's there?" she asked.

"Me, Lissy."

The lock was turned, the bolt drawn and the door opened. Miss, dressed as usual, stepped back as he entered, and stood in the centre of the room regarding him half doubtfully, half defiantly, as if doubtful how this new act of lawlessness would be received, but determined to brave even the consequences of his displeasure.

"What, Lissy. Do you shrink from me?"

The child came up to him and wound her arms round his neck. She was outwardly calm, but he felt her heart beat, and her pulse throb.

Catching her with caresses and words of kindness, he placed her on a chair.

"Am't you going to turn against me now?" she asked.

"No, Lissy, not now."

"Why don't you? I give you so much trouble."

"That's true, Lissy. You give me a good deal of trouble."

"I wish I was dead. I wonder what God made me so for?"

"God made you very well. A dash too much of pepper, perhaps, but that is a matter of taste."

Miss laughed, and, lifting her face, softly rubbed her cheek against his board.

"Is it you who spoil me," she whispered. "You ought to scold me."

"Perhaps I will by-and-by."

There was a moment of silence.

"Did you mean to kill Robert?"

"No; I meant to kill Waters."

"Did you think it was Waters?"

"Yes. I awoke to find some one bending over me. I had been dreaming of her, and Dr. Fox and Waters, and that they were trying to get me away from you."

"Then you thought the person bending over you was Waters?"

"I hadn't time to think. The idea flashed into my mind. He put his arms round me, and I thought he was going to carry me off. I always sleep with a knife under my pillow, and I got it and stabbed till he let me go."

"When did you discover that it was Robert?"

"When he spoke. Then the gas was lighted, people came, and I locked the door."

"How did you know that you did not kill Robert?"

"I knew by your face when you opened the door."

"Can you always read faces so well?"

"I can always read yours."

"You are a dangerous girl, Lissy. What shall I do with you?"

"Send me to prison."

"Do you want to go to prison?"

"I want to go away from here, and I don't want to trouble you any more."

"My darling child, what should I do without you?"

"Love some one else."

"Are you willing?"

"If you want to."

"Who can I love; can you tell me?"

"Love Regie."

"Don't you love Regie?"

"Yes; and she loves you. Strange, isn't it?"

"She says that she should love me."

"Strange that I should love her when she loves you."

"I didn't love Clytie."

"No, not much."

Miss laughed, and by way of punishment for past offenses, pulled his beard.

"Why do you wish to leave here, Lissy?"

"Because."

"That is no reason."

"Because I do."

"Is that a reason?"

"I want to go where you'll never see me again."

"What have I done to offend you?"

"Nothing. It is those mean people who talk."

"Who talks, Lissy?"

"Dr. Fox, Mrs. Shaw, and a lot of them."

"What do they say?"

"I won't tell you."

"I know what they say."

"I'll bet you don't."

"Mustn't bet, Lissy. In this case you would lose."

"Tell me what they say."

"They say you are too old to live under the care of a young guardian."

Miss looked up into his eyes as if she would read therein the rest of his thought.

"I have known they would say so, Miss. That is why I come so seldom to see you. That is why I want you to remain here with Miss Shaw, who is a true, hearted, noble girl."

"Yes," said Miss. "I'd die for Regie. But Mrs. Shaw is mean, and Dr. Fox is mean. He was here to-day talking about you."

"Did you hear what he said?"

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## THE FOX FAMILY.

Metaphorically speaking, Dr. Fox sat the next morning in the bosom of his family. The family consisted of a wife, a son and a daughter. The wife was a pale, delicate little woman, distinguished rather for domestic virtues than for intellectual attainments. She was known among her intimate friends as the woman who believed in her husband. We are not to infer that women of similar faith are rare, but that Mrs. Fox was prominent in the possession of this virtue. She quoted her husband as her husband quoted the Bible. Probably it had never occurred to her that he might err in opinion or in act. The suggestion would certainly have met no encouragement. Her general disposition induced her to regard those who did disagree with him with Christian forbearance, and to give due weight to the fact that people do not enjoy equal advantages of arriving at the truth.

The son was a tall, ungainly youth of twenty. If it were permissible to criticise the operation of nature, we might say that in his formation attention to details had been sacrificed to the purpose of substantial superstructure. There was a general appearance of largeness, most remarkable, however, in the extremities. He was one of those youths for whom a generous diet might be safely recommended. Should nature ever determine to fill him out he might become presentable. As he was at the time he is presented to the reader, his personal attractions were not of a character to command admiration. There was, however, in his bearing and in the expression of his countenance, an undefinable something which indicated a tendency to fastness. His clothes were cut with a feeble imitation of the noble style. One could but feel that with a little encouragement he would develop into a rather loud young man. Circumstances, however, were against him. A clergyman's son does not enjoy that impunity for social improprieties which enables other young men to achieve notoriety in youth. He inherits from his father the right to be an example to his generation. Ladies accept him by virtue of his parentage as a harmless lamb whom they may put with safety. Young Fox made a compromise between inclination and circumstances. He accepted respectability as a garment too serviceable to be discarded, but not so essential to happiness that it might not be laid aside on occasion.

In the formation of the daughter, Miss Kitty Fox, nature had followed a different plan. Miss Kitty was not large but exquisitely moulded. In growth she had yielded readily to the chisel of a finer sculptor. She inherited her mother's petite form, with her father's generous temperament. A year and a half younger than her brother, the sweep and contour of her person indicated a ripe maturity. She had the low brow, pale complexion and dreamy eyes which Italian painters have transmitted as characteristics of a type of wo-

"I heard a part. They asked Regie some questions that she wouldn't answer. Then they tried to make her. I couldn't stand that. I rushed in and told Dr. Fox that he was a meddling old fool."

"Did you, Miss?" and the wicked man laughed.

"Wasn't I right?"

"You told the truth at all events. To-morrow I shall tell him the same in different language."

"Will you?" asked Miss, her eyes snapping.

"As surely as I can find him. Now, Lissy, you must go to bed. I will see you to-morrow."

Unterrified by Dr. Fox's warning, the girl raised her lips for a kiss.

"Before I go," said Mr. Gray, "I want you to make me one promise."

"Well."

"Promise me that you will never, under any circumstances, run away without letting me know where you go?"

Miss was silent.

"Promise me."

"I may want to some time."

"That is why I want your promise."

"You will be rid of me then."

"I don't want to be rid of you."

"Upon your word?"

"Upon my word."

"Well, then, I promise. May I go in to see Bob?"

"Yes, if you wish to."

They passed into the room where Bob was lying. The surgeon was still in attendance, and Regie was seated by the bedside. Miss, nothing daunted, walked up to the bedside and leaned over, looking into the young man's face.

"Bob," she said, "I'm sorry I didn't know it was you."

"It wasn't me, Miss."

"Who was it?"

"Whisk."

They all laughed at this characteristic reply. Miss bent low over the bed.

"Bob," she said, "you have asked me a hundred times to kiss you, and I never would."

"That's true, Miss."

"Well, do you want I should kiss you now?"

"Yes."

She bent over and kissed his lips.

"There, be a good boy and get well, and don't let Dr. Fox know it."

Regie overjoyed at this happy denouement, caught Miss in her arms. The surgeon retired, and Mr. Gray approached to say good night.

"If you kiss me," said Miss, "you must kiss Regie, too."

Regie blushed scarlet. She drew back a little, and sent one swift glance up to his eyes. The young man met the glance, took her hand, drew her gently towards him, passed his arm around her waist, as the resistance he met was not of a positive character, but rather put forth as if intended to be overcome, and her dewy lips very temptingly, he pressed them softly.

"Bless you, my children," said Miss, with mock gravity, and they separated for that night.

men more remarkable for subtle force of character than domestic virtues. An experienced parent would have been admonished, by her shifting, treacherous eyes and drooping, sensuous mouth, that a vigilant husband would conduce to her present peace and future security.

The family had just finished breakfast when a carriage stopped at the door. Miss Kitty had vacated her seat and took a position at the window, the blinds so arranged that she could enjoy that darling privilege of young girls—see (on occasion) without being seen. She now saw a handsome young man alight from the carriage and descend the steps. The door bell rang. Miss Kitty was suddenly considerate of the fact that the maid was busy with household duties, and answered the bell herself. The gentleman saw at a glance that she was not a servant, and raised his hat as he inquired if he could see Dr. Fox. Miss Kitty thought he could. The gentleman handed her his card, which the young lady glanced at while conveying it to her parental parent. On the card was printed, in plain substantial letters, the name, "John Gray."

A slight nervous tremor passed over the rubicund visage of the clergyman as he read the name. He directed his daughter to show the gentleman into his study, and added that in future she might leave the bell to be answered by the servant.

Five minutes later Dr. Fox entered his study. A man, who seemed to him to be tall and muscular, rose from a chair and bowed as the clergyman entered.

"The Rev. Dr. Fox, I believe," said the gentleman. The Rev. Dr. Fox bowed assent.

"My name is John Gray. The name, however, may not inform you that I am the guardian of a young lady at present residing in the family of the late Mr. Reuben Shaw."

There was a certain preciseness in this address painfully suggestive to the clergyman of legal proceedings. He bowed again and said he was happy to meet Mr. Gray. If he did not speak the exact truth the dereliction must be ascribed to social etiquette, which acquiesces a certain plasticity of conscientiousness on the part of the sacred profession.

"I have called," said the visitor, "to make some inquiries in regard to a conversation in which I am informed took place yesterday between Mrs. Shaw and yourself, of which my ward and myself were subjects."

The candid reader will readily acquit Dr. Fox of any design to injure an innocent party. The art of Mrs. Smith had convinced him for the moment that Mr. Gray was a very wicked man, and was leading a young girl astray. Filled with this idea he had performed a duty in warning Mrs. Shaw that her hospitality was being abused. But with Mr. Gray's searching eye upon him he became vividly conscious that he had made a very grave accusation on very slight evidence. His vanity, however, opposed such a confession of error. He answered, therefore, with an effort to assume a tone of hauteur.

"Such a conversation did take place."

"In that conversation," resumed the lawyer, "I am informed you made certain charges reflecting upon my relations with my ward."

"I made no charges, whatever."

"Sir, a man of your intelligence does not need to be informed that suspicions urged by a reputable person

assume the nature of an accusation. In matters affecting the honor of a woman, the world does not wait for proofs. It judges on rumor and condemns without proof. I am here to offer you the alternative of retracting your accusations in the presence of all the persons before whom they were made, or of attempting to substantiate them in open court."

The clergyman was visibly agitated. He had not expected such energetic proceedings. A suit brought against him for defamation of character, with such a weak defense as he could offer, would subject him to the ridicule and scorn of the community. But a retraction before Mrs. Shaw, before Regina, before Miss, with Mr. Gray dictating its terms—was a humiliating alternative. He replied after some hesitation:

"You are a lawyer, Mr. Gray, and as such have an advantage over me. I ask time to consult my legal adviser."

An angry gleam flashed from Mr. Gray's eyes as he rose facing the clergyman.

"Sir," he said, "this is not a question of law. It is a question of justice between man and man—a question to be determined on the broad and changeless principles of right, which every intelligent human being comprehends. And you, sir, a Christian clergyman, having traduced a young girl, desire to consult with a lawyer to see if the machinery of courts will enable you to make a show of defense. I shall not give you an hour for consideration. My carriage is at the door. Mrs. Shaw is expecting us. If you do not choose to accompany me you will be held to such accountability as the law provides."

"Mr. Gray, this precipitancy indicates a desire to intimidate."

"Not at all. For myself and my ward, I prefer the searching investigation of a legal examination. I am content, however, to undo the mischief that has been done. The suspicions to which you have given circulation and lent the sanction of your name, are as yet confined to four persons. If you make a full retraction in their presence, no further proceedings will be taken."

Dr. Fox saw that there was nothing to be gained by a controversy with his inexorable visitor. The man's presence and manner were convincing proofs of his innocence. He inwardly cursed Mrs. Smith, and vowed his willingness to make ample reparation for any act of injustice he had involuntarily committed.

When they had passed out of the house, Miss Kitty was on the steps, chatting with some children on the way to school. Why was Miss Kitty there? Was it fate that prompted her to place herself again in the handsome stranger's way? Were handsome men so rare as that she must stoop to subterfuge to obtain from one a formal bow?

Miss Kitty could hardly have answered these questions. In her own church circle were men as handsome as Mr. Gray—men with whom she associated freely. But this man, a stranger, had impressed her ardent fancy. His name was familiar to her, for were not Miss Shaw and herself friends and rivals? and was not Miss Shaw suspected in gossiping circles of a secret admiration for her father's associate, now regarded as a rising young man and a "good catch"?

Miss Kitty was not what is termed a romantic girl. Romantic girls love adventures for the sake of the romances, but Miss Kitty sought them with a deeper purpose. Her circle was narrow and filled with a dull uniformity of men. They seemed to her all alike. The same topics of conversation were introduced and discussed in the same commonplace manner. They were dreadfully good and not at all dangerous. They flirted in an insipid way, betraying consciousness all the time that they were doing something very wicked. A little flirtation went a great way with most of them, and yet fell far short of Miss Kitty's desires. It was all, however, that could be expected of them, for they were conspicuous examples of what young gentlemen should be.

Miss Kitty was longing for a dangerous flirtation. She was tired of the other kind. She had been led up to a certain line so often and suffered to fall back that the pastime was growing monotonous. Her wildly pulsating blood demanded stronger excitement. Her sweeping glances shot out in every direction for the coming man, but so far she had failed to meet him. The balls and parties where he might be were denied to her. Her father did not approve of dancing, and would never permit her to learn or practice the art. Her opportunities, therefore, for forming such acquaintances as she secretly desired were rare.

The young lawyer, pre-occupied, and not at any time a general admirer of the sex, only observed a pretty young girl on the steps, to whom courtesy required a slight obeisance. He caught her eye, however, and her smile, and glancing back was surprised to see how prettily she blushed. But as the carriage rolled away he thought no more about her.

Not so with Miss Kitty. The casual glance of his magnetic eyes caused such a thrill of pleasure as she had never experienced. Her ardent imagination invested him with a thousand graces. The repose of his calm, stony face seemed moods. The rich brown hair falling over his full white brow, realized her most fanciful dreams of beauty. The seriousness of his countenance lent an additional charm. She stood half entranced, following him with hungry eyes until he was lost to view. The school children, finding themselves no longer objects of interest, proceeded on their way. Miss Kitty disappeared within the house to indulge, undisturbed, her excited imagination.

Mrs. Shaw had been prepared by a note from Mr. Gray for the interview. She received the two gentlemen in her sitting room. The clergyman's explanation was satisfactory. He had become convinced by a conversation with Mr. Gray that his suspicions were unfounded. He deeply regretted that he had given so ready credence to a woman of whom he knew nothing, but with whose sorrows he sympathized. He was gratified that the opportunity was afforded him to make such reparation as was in his power.

Mr. Gray then sought Miss Shaw. The occurrence of the past night necessitated the removal of Miss Robert Shaw's contrition was not a feeling to be relied upon. He might be harmless when himself, but no one could answer for him when under the influence of liquor.

Regina was deeply grieved. She was really attached

to Miss and solicitous of her welfare. She realized, also, that the relation between Mr. Gray and his ward was one of extreme delicacy. Miss was no longer a child—Mr. Gray was a young man. What arrangements could be made that would secure Miss from the aspersions of her enemies?

"It is not probable," said Mr. Gray, pursuing the conversation, "that Miss will long remain in my charge. The investigation that I have caused to be made leaves little doubt but the woman that claims her is in reality her mother."

"But, surely, if the woman is not a proper person to have charge of her, the court will appoint a guardian."

"The difficulty is to prove that Mrs. Smith is not a proper person to have charge of her own daughter. She has fortified herself against all attacks. Her application for admission into Dr. Fox's church is but one of the measures she has taken to prove her respectability. The most I now hope for is to secure the appointment of a guardian for Miss who will be empowered to take possession in trust of her part of the estate."

"That will be a good deal," replied Regina.

"If we succeed; but Mr. Hopps is Mrs. Smith's counsel."

"I think I recognize his hand in all that has happened and is happening. If he succeeds in having her removed from here, a great point will be gained." A serious expression came over the young girl's face. Her downcast gaze avoided that of her companion.

"May I interpret your thought?" asked the young man, gently.

"If you can."

"You think Mr. Hopps would like to produce an estrangement between you and me?"

"I am quite sure he would."

"I suspect he would. But the removal of Miss need not affect our friendly relations."

"It weakens the bond. We should never see you but for her."

"We will find means to strengthen the bond if only to cease Mr. Hopps. I, at least, have no desire to assist in the accomplishment of the purpose on which he has set his heart."

Miss Shaw blushed and tried to laugh. It was evident that she was ill at ease.

"I was thinking," she said, "since last night of Robert. Is there no way to turn him from the evil course he is now pursuing?"

"I have been thinking of him, too. Would you be willing to part with him for a time?"

"Yes, if it seems for his good."

"I fear nothing can be done with him while he remains in this city. His reckless associates, with whom he is kind of king, make his life too attractive."

"What do you propose?"

"To induce him to leave the city and engage in some pursuit that would employ his energies and occupy his mind. Once away from his city haunts he might lead a different life."

The project pleased Regina, and Mr. Gray explained it more at length. He had left some winning claims at Red Mountain in the care of friends who had written

him that there was a prospect of their proving valuable. The necessary knowledge to prosecute the work would not be difficult to acquire, and there were friends who would gladly do a service to a friend of his. There would be opportunities, of course, to pursue his dissipated life, but the great majority of the miners were earnest, industrious men.

It was arranged, therefore, that Regina should convey the proposition to her mother, and with her sanction Mr. Gray should make the effort to induce Robert, as soon as he recovered his health, to spend the summer at Red Mountain. Miss Shaw should remain where she was until Robert should decide upon his future course.

When Mr. Gray returned to his office, he found awaiting him the detective whom he had employed to ascertain the facts in regard to the supposed death of the mother of Miss Shaw. The detective had written from time to time, but was now returned to make a full report.

The detective stated that he had followed Smith from the time of his striking the rich pocket at Red Mountain to the year 1850, when he arrived in Stockton. It was susceptible of proof that he had married in 1852, and that his wife had borne him a daughter. It was also susceptible of proof that his wife had separated from him, and returned to San Francisco. If she had died it was not until at least eight years after Miss Shaw was born.

The detective through an associate had also followed the woman known as Mrs. Smith through an eventful life to a period when she visited Stockton as a member of a dramatic troupe. While in that city she had seceded from the troupe and married a miner whose name was Smith. She had accompanied her husband to the mines, but after a short residence eloped with a gentleman, and returned to San Francisco.

There were conflicting statements, which rendered it impossible to determine whether the Smith that this woman married was the father of Miss Shaw. The people through whom Smith had been traced were not the same people through whom Mrs. Smith had been traced. No one had been found who knew Smith's wife previous to her marriage, so as to iden-

tify her as the Mrs. Smith now claiming to be his widow, or to prove that she was another woman. The people who had known Mrs. Smith before her marriage had lost sight of her afterward until she again appeared in San Francisco. It was only known to them that she married a man named Smith, and went with him to a mining settlement where he had interests. The time that had elapsed, the absence of records, the general informality of marriages, and the transitory character of the population, rendered it exceedingly difficult to determine anything with certainty beyond the facts that Smith, who afterward struck the Pocket in Red Mountain, was married in Stockton in 1852, and that the woman now known as Mrs. Smith, and claiming to be the widow of the same Smith, and the mother of Miss Shaw, had also married a man named Smith in Stockton about the same time. The presumption was strong that the woman claiming to be Smith's was so in fact.

But there were two points on which to hang a doubt. The woman Smith married was represented to be rather under the ordinary height of women, whereas the woman claiming to be Smith's widow was of full medium height. The real Mrs. Smith was also described as being apparently twenty-eight or thirty years of age at the time of her marriage, whereas the woman claiming to be Mrs. Smith was not apparently more than thirty at the present date, fourteen years later.

There was another point on which the detective was disposed to place little stress, though it seemed to Mr. Gray as of some importance. The woman Smith married was very dark, and supposed to be Spanish though she spoke English and Spanish with equal fluency. At least people who knew her while living with Smith represented her as conversing in both languages with apparent facility. If Mrs. Smith had no knowledge of Spanish the point would be against her, though instances are known of persons forgetting through long disuse a language with which they have at one time been familiar. The case, therefore, was in a complicated condition, with the weight of evidence in Mrs. Smith's favor.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

MISS DEMONSTRATES THAT SHE IS A STRANGE

## GIRL.

Mr. Smith called on Dr. Fox at the appointed time. The clergyman was absent, but was momentarily expected home. Mrs. Smith accepted an invitation to wait in his study, and was conducted into that pious retreat by the clergyman's son.

There were evangelical publications with which the lady might have amused herself while waiting for the pastor, if her mind had been attuned to that description of literature. She was not, however, in pursuit of the kind of knowledge these publications conveyed. The young man who conducted her into the room, and who lingered, regarding her with a kind of idiotic admiration, presented a much more fruitful field of study.

Mr. Joseph Fox prided himself on having an eye for beautiful women. The variety that pleased him best was women of the world. In his own circles he was regarded as a harmless boy. The mature women petted him as the clergyman's son, and the girls sometimes laughed at him for being so large a boy. The lady before him was handsome and elegant, and her manner toward him was a skillful blending of deference and cordiality. The deference was to his position, and the cordiality to a gentleman with whom she was not adverse to a better acquaintance. So instead of retiring and leaving the lady to the pursuit of evangelical knowledge, he yielded to her delicately intimated desire to engage him in conversation.

Mrs. Smith's experienced eye took his measure at a glance. He was a good subject upon whom to practice her fascinations of manner and conversation. Perhaps at this interview she had no further object than amusement. In her new role of pious respectability a devoted friend in the person of a clergyman's son might be of service. It was not as a clergyman's son, however, that she affected to regard him. She permitted him to perceive that in her estimation he stood on his own merits. She imparted to him the pleasing sensation of being considered as a man. By degrees their conversation became confidential, at least on the gentleman's part. He shared with her the secret of one or two indulgences in such forms of dissipation as an occasional ride to the Cliff in society not generally regarded as orthodox. Encouraged by the evident admiration this social dereliction inspired, he mentioned the names of one or two ladies not known in the orthodox circles. Mrs. Smith modestly lowered her eyes at this mention, and the slightest possible flush suffused her face. Having paid tribute to virtue, she stole a glance at the young man in which reproof and desire were plainly expressed.

Her glance seemed to say "I am afraid you are wicked, but I know you are nice." Mr. Joseph Fox excused himself for these delinquencies on the ground that he had found church circles a trifle show. A man could not be expected to be a saint at so early an age. The proverbial wild oats must be sown, though his social position debarred him from the pleasure of sowing them under the gaze of the public.

The arrival of the elder Fox interrupted their conversation. The clergyman greeted his new convert with cordiality, but with less tenderness than on her previous visit. He informed her that he had spoken with Mrs. Shaw and with Mr. Gray on the subject Mrs. Smith had introduced, but he was afraid the evidence on which her suspicions were founded was too slight to warrant earnest remonstrance.

"I can readily conceive," said the lady sadly, "that Mrs. Shaw does not like to offend Mr. Gray." It was well known that Mr. Shaw died insolvent, yet his family maintained their former style of living. She did not know as she ought to blame them. Women were helpless creatures. She then turned the conversation into spiritual channels, and thoroughly related herself in the clergyman's estimation.

Passing out she encountered Joseph and contrived to slip her card into his hand. The young man acknowledged the fact of its reception by a loud wink intended to inform the lady that he was sufficiently an adept in the mysteries of intrigue to comprehend that she had conferred upon him the honor of a clandestine appointment.

Three weeks passed without event worthy of record. Bob Shaw's wounds healed rapidly. When the surgeon pronounced him recovered Mr. Gray sought the promised conference.

The young man was thoroughly ashamed of his part of the adventure. He admitted that he had a recollection of entering the apartment of Miss Shaw with the intention of getting the kiss he had so often tried to obtain. It was a mean, cowardly act, and he deserved to be shot for it. Mr. Gray might shoot him and welcome. He did not know as there was any particular use in his living anyhow.

Mr. Gray did not avail himself of the permission so freely given. He had a faint idea that he might do society a service by so doing; but he was not ambitious of distinction as a public benefactor. So he talked gravely and earnestly to Bob, and finally proposed the trip to Red Mountain.

Bob accepted the proposition with alacrity. He wanted to get out of town. He was disgracing himself and family when he ought to be a help to them. After a little he sobered down.

"Regret I miss me," he said, as if suggesting an excuse for not putting the project into immediate execution.

"Your sister is willing you should go, as it is for your benefit."

"Well, I'll go; but you must take care of Miss Shaw. Ain't through the fight yet. Do you know, I like the little girl. Isn't another girl in town that would've come and kissed me after that? But she knew I didn't mean to insult her, and she isn't the kind to bear me no ill-will."

Mr. Gray admitted that Miss Shaw had a generous nature.

"Isn't she a brave little piece. Did she ever tell you about going to see her mother?"

"No," replied Mr. Gray.

Bob related the adventure as it occurred. Mr. Gray was more astonished than pleased. If she gave way to such wild impulses it was impossible to tell at what moment she would throw herself into the hands of her enemies.

"I perceive," said Mr. Gray. "I must keep a close watch over the child."

"Yes; there's a heap of coin at stake. Why, that crowd would kill a dozen girls for a half of thirty thousand dollars."

"I dare say," replied Mr. Gray, reflectively.

"If I was in town," continued Bob, with a sid<sup>g</sup> glance at Mr. Gray's face, "they'd be a little careful. They know our boys. There's fifty of 'em, all hard hitters, that would go through any house in town if I said the word."

"I perceive," said Mr. Gray smiling; "that you don't like this banishment to Red Mountain."

"Isn't that, Gray. I've done a mean act and ought to be punished. You're Miss's guardian, and if you say San Quintin, San Quintin it is. But I want you to look out for Miss. 'Like the little girl.'"

"I believe you do."

"Didn't she kiss me after that! Never so taken back in my life."

"I know she'll find a friend in you hereafter."

"Won't she, though! If she ever wants a fellow whipped—"

"Let us hope she won't want a fellow whipped," interrupted Mr. Gray. "If you want Miss to like you, you must be a man. You've been a boy long enough. Quit these wild ways, these reckless associates. At Red Mountain you'll find two kinds of men—one kind idle, dissolute, thieving, breaking all the laws of God and man. You go there your own master, and as you choose your associates so will your life be."

"Think I'll take the steady kind. Be a change. Enough of the others down here."

"When will you be ready to go?"

"Give me three days. Want to say good-by to the boys. Haven't seen them for three weeks. Don't dare to come here. Afraid of Rog's."

"I am glad they are. Good-by now. I'll see you again before you go."

"Good-by, old boy. S'pose you'll come down with the stamps. Don't recognize me at the Bank."

"Never mind. You shall have a fair start."

"Now for Miss," thought Mr. Gray. "The poor child must be prepared to go back to her mother."

Miss came to him in the sitting-room. She stood before him and looked searchingly in his eyes.

"You've got bad news," she said.

"Why do you think so?"

"See it in your eyes."

"Can you tell me what this news is?"

"It's about me. That's all I know."

"Yes; it is about you. Do you know after all, Miss, you'll have to go back to your mother."

The child's head dropped. She looked half reproachfully at her friend.

"Are you tired of me?" she asked, at last.

"No, Lissy, not tired of you. You are as dear to me as ever. But in law a mother has a right to her child."

Then he told her as well as he could what investigation he had made, and with what result.

She listened quietly, following him with precocious intelligence, asking a question now and then, showing that she appreciated the nature of the evidence adduced in support of her mother's claim.

"Wait," she said, when he had finished; "I've got something to show you." She left the room, but soon returned with an old-fashioned daguerreotype in her hand.

"Who does that look like," she asked, holding it before Mr. Gray.

Mr. Gray examined the face narrowly from every point of view. It was the face of a mature woman, perhaps thirty years of age.

"Whose is this?" he asked.

"Does it look like her?" asked Miss.

"Not in the least."

"Well; it is the picture of my mother."

Mr. Gray looked in surprise at the child, but her face wore an expression of seriousness that convinced him that she had reason for the strange assertion she had made.

"How long have you had this?"

"Do you remember once at Red Mountain you asked me if I had ever seen my mother?"

"Yes."

"Well, when I went home I remembered what you said. I had never thought before I must have had a mother. I was so unlike other girls. If I thought at all I thought I had grown from a wasp to be a little girl. But now I remembered that my father had given me a picture, and told me it was the picture of my mother. I did not think much of it at the time, but when you asked me about my mother I thought I would get it and see how she looked. Then I laid it away, but sometimes looked at it and wished she was alive. Then you know she came and said she was my mother. I knew she was not, but you were going away, and I thought, perhaps, she might love me even if I was not her daughter. But as soon as I saw her I knew she did not. But you were going away and no one else cared for me."

"Poor child! Poor child!" murmured the lawyer, a suspicious redness about his eyes; "then you wanted to be loved, after all."

"Yes," she replied, softly. "I did not know it, but I did. I've often been very hungry, but my stomach never craved food as my heart craved love."

Mr. Gray had put his arm around the girl's waist and drawn her to his side. There was a moment of silence, for the thoughts of both were traveling back to the school-house at Red Mountain, and to the forest walks where they had so often strayed hand in hand. It gave him more pleasure to think that he had fed that starved little heart, if even with crumbs, than he could imagine in any intellectual triumph that might be in store for him. The flexible little waist yielded to his clasp, and, as of old, a little arm stole round his neck. The brown, but now clean fingers stroked his beard, and ran, with a touch of delicious tenderness, through his hair.

"Do you remember when you first came to me at the school-house at Red Mountain?" he asked.

"Yes; I think if there is a God He took mercy on me that night and sent me to you. Since I could remember I had been jeered at and laughed at, and told that I was wicked. The miners were sometimes kind to me in a thoughtless way, when they saw me driven to madness, but no one seemed to think me quite human. I went to you expecting you to drive me away or show that you were ashamed to have me for a scholar. I remember how my heart seemed to open when you spoke to me. It seemed as if something sweet and peaceful had dropped in, and for the first time in a good many years I cried."

"I remember, and without having been bad, you promised to be good."

"Yes; I have been very lonely and very unhappy since then when I thought you had forgotten me, but not so wretched as I was before. I remembered that some one had loved me."

The master's arm pressed closer about the pupil's waist, and the pupil's arm wound closer round the master's neck. For the moment three years were annihilated, and they were master and pupil again.

"And now they want to take you away from me, Lissy. The law is stronger than I."

"I wish I could tell you something," she said, after a pause; "if you would not laugh at me."

"Tell me, Lissy. I promise not to laugh."

"My father comes to me sometimes—in the night."

"In your dreams?"

"I suppose so, though I seem to be awake. But I see him so plainly—not as he was when you knew him, but as he was years before, when I was a little child."

"Well; does he seem to speak to you?"

"I do not hear him, yet I understand what he wants to say. He tells me—you promise not to laugh?"

"Yes, child."

"He tells me that my real mother still lives, and in this city."

"Can he tell you where she lives?"

"No; but I see pictures. I see a dirty narrow alley with tall brick houses on each side. Then I see rows of bottles of all kinds and decanters and boxes of cigars."

"And what do these pictures mean?"

"I don't know. I think perhaps my mother lives in this alley, and that she has something to do with these bottles."

Mr. Gray did not laugh. He was too candid and liberal a mind to hold to the belief that the mysteries of nature were yet fully unfolded to man. He had seen no visions himself but such as his own imagination formed, but others might enjoy powers he did not possess.

But the law sees no visions. The law dreams no dreams. Between the abodes of the dead and the living the laws draw an impenetrable veil. The existence of Miss's mother must be proved by some other means than the visions of Miss.

Every interview with Miss fixed her closer in his heart. There was no passion in this love, but an exquisite tenderness, the love which sacrifices all for the object loved, the love that is gratified in seeing its object happy. Questioning his own heart he felt that he

could be content to know that she was happy with another, or could find happiness in making her happy with himself. But to part with her and know the parting made her miserable was a step never to be taken.

That night the young lawyer did the hardest thinking he had ever done in his short life. His own case was the knottiest that had yet claimed legal investigation. He even thought of marriage as a way out of the labyrinth of difficulties, but a marriage without her mother's consent would get him no legal right to the custody of his wife. It would only disclose the disinterested guardian and counsel as the impatient suitor possibly tempted by a rich bride. He might wait, but with Miss in Mrs. Smith's hands there was no probability that he would see her again. As Bob Shaw had said, there were men who would kill a dozen girls for one-half of thirty thousand dollars. Or she might be forced into a marriage with some villain who cared only for her money. Or she might be sent abroad to starve. Or she might be buried in some Insane Asylum. The only sure way out was to take her and fly, or to conceal her until she arrived at an age to contract a legal marriage.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### AT THE THEATRE.

It became Mr. Gray's duty as temporary guardian of Miss, authorized by the court to inquire into the management of the estate of the late J. Smith, to confer with Mr. Hopps, counsel for Mrs. Smith. He found that gentleman courteous and friendly, careful to protect his client, but throwing no unnecessary impediment in the way of Mr. Gray's performance of his duty. It was discovered after much trouble and under threat of contempt of court, that Mr. Smith had made no investments at all, but had deposited the money in different banking institutions, on special deposits, so that it could be drawn at a day's notice. The sum of fifty five thousand dollars was discovered, the other five thousand Mrs. Smith represented as having been expended in court fees and other necessary expenses.

The morning after the conference between Mr. Gray and Miss, as related in the last chapter, Mr. Gray and Mr. Hopps held their final interview. The certificates of deposit were made over to Mr. Gray, and the banks enjoined to hold the money until the court made further orders.

"I have often thought," said Mr. Hopps, when the business was concluded, "that we lawyers would get on much better if we had more confidence in each other. You have probably expended two or three thousand dollars to obtain information which I possessed at the start. Your detectives have informed you that my client was married to J. Smith as represented, and



by virtue of that marriage became at least putative father of our little heiress."

"Yes," admitted Mr. Gray, "your client married a J. Smith, and the presumption is that he was the same Smith who settled in 'Smith's Pocket.'"

"There is no doubt on that point. I could have given you proof of the fact, but in our suspicious way you must needs go to the trouble of hunting your own proof."

"If the time ever comes when all men tell the exact truth at all times and under all circumstances, our profession will fare badly."

"True. In this case I suspect you may get the appointment of a guardian to take care of the girl's property, but her person will be given in charge of her mother. There is no way to escape that."

"I am prepared to accept that result."

"In confidence, Mr. Gray, I regret it. Of course I must do my duty to my client, but I'd rather see the child under other guardianship. The mother seems a nice woman but she has bad associates."

Mr. Gray agreed with Mr. Hopps in that opinion. He was a little surprised, however, at its frank expression. Mr. Hopps continued:

"If Miss Smith should die before she is of age her mother will inherit the entire estate."

Mr. Gray knew this to be a fact, but his heart gave a throb at the thought.

"If the girl were a year older," continued Mr. Hopps impressively, "and I was her friend, I would see her married to some nice young man who would take care of her and of her property. Unfortunately, a marriage at thirteen without the consent of parents is not good in law. In this case the fact is to be regretted, as I wouldn't like to insure the child's life if she falls into certain hands."

"The law ties its own hands in some cases," was the non-committal reply of Mr. Gray.

"Yes, very often. Sometimes a good lawyer will work to defeat a wise law. If I were you, for instance, I would contrive some way to save this child."

"I shall exhaust legal remedies. Others a lawyer need not advise."

"In ordinary cases, no. In extraordinary ones, yes. This is an extraordinary case. It is a great misfortune the child is not a year older. But I have no right to give expression to my private sentiments when opposed to the interests of my client. My interest in the young lady must be urged as excuse. I trust you will forget that I have spoken, though in strict confidence between men who desire to see justice done."

Mr. Gray was not in the least the dupe of his wily opponent. Mr. Hopps still entertained hopes of success in his suit for Miss Shaw's hand, and Mr. Gray was an obstacle in his way. Could Mr. Gray be betrayed into some act which might necessitate a temporary absence from the city, Mr. Hopps might possibly be the gainer thereby.

That afternoon Miss Shaw and Misses were out shopping and embraced the opportunity to call at Mr. Gray's office. They surprised the athletic Tim in a slow pommelade across the office, his hands performing the service usually assigned to other members of the body. He reversed his position quickly when he

discovered he had an audience, and came forward, a little red in the face, to receive the ladies.

"Well, Tim," said Miss Shaw, "how soon are we to have that gymnastic exhibition?"

"As soon as you are all up in your parts," replied Tim, reminding the young lady of her not very brilliant attempts in the same line of performance. "Miss Miss does pretty well already."

Miss had in fact become a great friend of Tim. Her first attempt to balance a ruler had been a decided success, and she had gone from feat to feat with a skill and boldness that astonished and delighted her youthful teacher. We trust the young lady's propriety of conduct is too well established to require the mention of her steady omission of the particular feat in which on the afternoon in question they had found Tim engaged.

Leaving Miss to amuse herself with Tim for a few moments, Regina went into Mr. Gray's office. She was now not an unfrequent visitor there, for since her father's death there were many little matters requiring consultation.

The young lawyer looked worn and dejected. His professional labors were arduous, and besides he had his own causes of disquietude. The case of the People vs. Mrs. Smith was to come up in a few days and there seemed no way to avoid a disastrous defeat.

"You are working too hard, Mr. Gray," said Miss Shaw, standing beside him and laying her hand on his shoulder.

"It is not work; it is anxiety. Perhaps I should say worry. Hear Miss laugh. She does not realize that these happy days are almost over."

"Do you intend to give her up?"

"I've no way to help it—unless I run away with her," he added jestingly.

"Surely there ought to be some way—some legal and proper way. What is a law for if it isn't to protect people?"

"The law is all right; the trouble is in providing the facts. I am thoroughly convinced that Mrs. Smith is not Miss's mother, but the evidence which convinces me would have little weight with a jury. Since I have spoken with you, Miss has shown me a portrait which she says her father gave her, telling her it was the portrait of her mother. I know Miss speaks the truth, but produced at this late day, it will be regarded with suspicion."

"Why did not Miss show it to you sooner?"

"I don't think she can give a reason. She has ever been disinclined to speak of her mother, and probably did not realize that it had any value as evidence in court. But I need not trouble you with these details. I don't believe your woman's wit can find a way out of this dilemma."

"I am afraid not. Have you time to devote one evening to us—Miss and me?"

"I think so. What is the proposition?"

"Alice Kingsbury takes her farewell benefit this evening, and Miss wants to go. She has never been to a theatre in her life."

"Miss Kingsbury plays 'Fanchon' of course."

"Yes; and it is her farewell benefit."

"I am almost afraid of the effect of that play upon

our little friend's ardent imagination. Fanchon's early life and that of Miss were not unlike."

"But the child will be so disappointed. And Bob wants to go too?"

"Does Miss Shaw want very much to go?"

"Miss Shaw is waiting to be invited."

It was the first time Miss Shaw had intimated a desire to go out with him, though their acquaintance had grown into a familiar friendship. Since her father's death she had given up society, and this would be her first appearance, except at church.

Tim was dispatched to engage a box and soon returned with a ticket for Miss Kingsbury's own box, all others being engaged.

The girls in high spirits took Mr. Gray home to dinner. Miss, but little demonstrative when pleased, was unusually gay and animated.

Just before the curtain rose the four entered a stage box and took seats in view of one of the most fashionable audiences ever assembled in San Francisco. Miss Kingsbury was the pet of all circles, the high as well as the low, and all circles were represented in this announced as her farewell to the stage.

In the dress circle there were few persons who did not recognize Miss Shaw. Ladies who had been her rivals and gentlemen who had been devoted admirers, leveled their glasses, and bows greeted her from all quarters.

The reception—for such it was in effect—called the old light to her beautiful hazel eyes and the rich changing color to her cheeks. She had never seemed so beautiful in the most bewildering ballroom toilette as now in sombre black, unrelieved by the flash of diamonds or the softer lustre of flowers.

Miss sat gravely by her side, her face pale, her splendid eyes wandering composedly over the brilliant audience.

"Do all these people know you, Regie?" she asked.

"A good many of them do. Some are old school-mates of mine."

"Do they know Mr. Gray?"

"Let Mr. Gray answer for himself," and half-laughing she summoned Mr. Gray to the front.

The opera-glasses were again brought into service. Mr. Gray stood the ordeal like a veteran. He was what women call a fine-looking rather than a handsome man, and as study and thought gave maturity and character to his face, he gained in the higher elements of manly beauty. Even Miss Shaw, who had

never been at a loss for distinguished admirers, was rather proud to present him to that audience.

Mr. Robert Shaw's dress circle acquaintance was limited, but the gallery was his to a man. As he leaned forward to survey the tier in which he was usually an actor, some mischievous friends gave the signal for applause which swept the gallery.

Regina drew back behind the curtains and motioned Bob into obscurity.

The curtain rose. Miss forgot the audience. Her hand stole into Mr. Gray's and there she sat, all eyes and ears, silent undemonstrative, but quivering with feeling.

Fanchon darts upon the stage, ragged, forlorn. A crowd follows, hooting and derisive, forgetting that beneath those rags there beats a human heart.

The dark brow of Miss lowered, the thin line of pale upper lip drew tightly across her gleaming white teeth, and her eyes flamed as with fire.

Fanchon turns and faces her enemies. They fall back before that lithe, defiant little figure and the blaze of those wonderful eyes. The shouts of derision grow fainter and die away as the village hero advances and takes Fanchon's hand in his.

Then Mr. Gray felt the nervous grasp of Miss's hand relax and beheld the tears streaming from her eyes. The tears were pearls formed in that marvellous laboratory which we call the heart.

Then follows the village dance, in which Fanchon bears off the village hero, and after the dance the pretty love talk between Fanchon and her brave young lover.

The elfish shadow dance closes the act. The despised Fanchon forgets her misery in the contemplation of her own antics. The child enjoys her last frolic ere it becomes a woman. The weird scene, the silent watcher, the bubbling laugh of the child, the wild grace of her attitude, the wave of happiness that drowns every thought of sorrow, excites the duldest sensibility. The curtain descends, and a perfect storm of applause sweeps through the house.

Miss sank back in her chair, and after a moment leaning back put her mouth to Mr. Gray's ear.

"Does he marry her?" she asked.

"Yes," was the answer.

The child gave a sigh of relief.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## CHANCE

We have seen what patient investigation could do to unravel the mystery which surrounded the parentage of our heroine. Let us now follow the operations of that unknown element of human action, which may be Cause or Effect and which men call Chance.

One day a Chinese laundryman called at the office of a daily paper, and made known a desire to purchase a hundred old papers. As he wanted them to use as wrapping paper, it made no difference about dates. One date was the same to this Chinese intelligence as another.

A boy was directed to select the required number from packages which had been laid away to be thus disposed of.

Now Chance directed the boy to supply the Chinamen with papers of a certain date, of which there happened, by some chance, to be a surplus.

The Chinaman carried these papers to his laundry and laid them on a shelf. When a package of clothes was sent to a customer, one paper was taken from the shelf and wrapped around it.

One day a package of clothes, wrapped in one of the papers, was sent to the house of a woman who kept a bar in a building situated in an alley leading off Broadway street.

The bar, known by the suggestive but often deceptive name of "The Sailor's Home," was the resort of sailors, soldiers, wharf-rats, and also patronized by countrymen desirous of seeing a little city life on an economical scale of expenditure.

The woman who owned the "Sailor's Home" had the reputation of being an honest woman, with an eye to business. She was reputed to be content with the legitimate profits of her business, never countenanced violence, robbery, murder, or other varieties of crime for which her neighborhood was somewhat famous.

It chanced that this particular package arrived at the woman's apartment at an hour when business was slack. On that day there was no business at all. The woman was alone. She had nothing to do. Chance prompted her to take the newspaper wrapped around the clothes in her hand.

"Mother Nell," as the woman was called, was not much given to reading of any description. Reading was rather a task than a pleasure. Occasionally, when there had been a crime committed in her neighborhood, involving persons she knew, she would spell out the details in a daily paper, but her interest in current news went no farther. Her world was small and she did not concern herself about any other world.

But on this day, having a little time to kill and not knowing exactly how to kill it, she put her spectacles on her nose, and through them surveyed the columns of the paper.

The various items did not much interest her. The editorials she did not read. If murders were commit-

ted, she knew neither murderers nor their victims. The affairs were therefore wanting in that element of personal interest which adds so much zest to the newspaper items.

"Mother Nell" laid down the paper two or three times, but as she had nothing else to do, she picked it up as often. At last Chance directed her eye through her spectacles to the following paragraph:

"The case of the People vs. Mrs. Smith was called yesterday in the County Court. The petitioners ask that the Court appoint a guardian for the person of Melissa Smith, a girl twelve years of age, who has for some months been residing in this city with a woman known as Mrs. Smith, supposed to be Melissa Smith's mother. The petitioners claim that the woman Smith is not the child's mother, nor the widow, as she claims to be, of the late J. Smith, who committed suicide at Red Mountain some years ago. The estate of Smith is said to be valued at sixty thousand dollars. Being sworn, Mrs. Smith failed to give a satisfactory account of her management of the estate and the Court appointed John Gray, of the law firm of Shaw & Co., temporary guardian of Melissa Smith, and enjoined Mrs. Smith from any further action in the disposal of the estate until her right as widow is determined."

Half an hour of Mother Nell's leisure was occupied in spelling out the paragraph. Then she sat for some minutes with her chin resting on her hands, her elbows on her knees. Then she read the paragraph a second time very carefully. Then she folded it and put it away. Then she sat down again in her favorite attitude, and for a full hour was absorbed in thought. Blind Chance had done its work. The result was left to more or less intelligent human action.

In the afternoon the "Sailor's Home" was closed against sailors, soldiers and landmen. Mother Nell, herself, in respectable attire, wended her way to more respectable localities. Enlightened by numerous inquiries, she finally arrived at the place of her destination—the office of Shaw & Co.

Tim, for once on his feet and in the ordinary attitude of an office-boy, presented himself to answer her inquiries. She wanted to see Mr. Gray and was shown into that gentleman's office.

Mr. Gray received her with his usual politeness. At the first glance he saw only an ordinary applicant for legal services. Time had done its work, and perhaps an irregular life had assisted time to do more than it would have done under other circumstances.

The woman unfolded the paper which Chance had put in her hand that morning, and pointed out the paragraph which had arrested her attention.

The lawyer scrutinized the woman narrowly. A little bloated with drink, features coarser, hair thinner and gray, he still detected a resemblance to the picture Mils had shown him two days before.

His lawyer's habits stilled the tumult in his mind. It was not for him to make out a case for her. She must tell her own story if she had a story to tell.

He placed the woman in a chair, closed and locked the office-door and seated himself before her.

"Does this paragraph interest you, madam?" he asked.

"Kinder think it does."

"What is your name?"

"My name used to be Smith."

"Was Smith your maiden name?"

"Smith was my married name."

"When were you married?"

"In Stockton, in 1852."

"What month?"

"Don't remember."

"Do you still live with your husband?"

"Husband's dead."

"Do you know when he died?"

"Not exactly. Two or three years ago."

"Were you living with him at the time of his death?"

"No; only lived with him eighteen months."

"Did you have a child while you lived with your husband?"

"Had one—a girl."

"Have you reason to believe that the Melissa Smith mentioned in that paragraph is your daughter?"

"Know she is."

"Do you know that there is another woman claiming to be her mother?"

"Know who she is."

"Who is she?"

"A play actress that married my husband's brother."

"Is your husband's brother still living?"

"Was, two years ago."

"Do you know where?"

"Prospect n' somewhere in Idaho."

"Did you see him two years ago?"

"Yes, always comes to see me."

"What is your present occupation?"

"Keep a bar."

"On what street?"

"Isn't a street. Gummer's Alley."

The lawyer felt his hair rise on end as he thought of the visions of Mils—the narrow alley and the rows of bottles.

"Madam," said he, "you came just in time. The other Mrs. Smith's right to a widow's interest in your late husband's estate will be decided in three days."

"Going to court?"

"Yes."

"Won't go to court. It's nothing to me. Thought I come and see you."

"But, madam, if you can prove what you state to me, you are entitled to thirty thousand dollars."

"Don't want no money. Got enough of my own."

"Why then do you follow your present business?"

"Cause I've got used to it. The boys all comes to see me, and they expects to see me. Wouldn't know what to do if I hadn't the bar."

"You have some interest, perhaps, in the fate of your daughter?"

"Don't know as I have. Had a rough old time with Smith, and the first chance I had I ran off and left him. Don't want any of his money."

"Have you any objection to going to court?"

"Won't go to court. You see, Mr. Lawyer, I got into a difficulty once, in the mines, and had to shoot a man. Got off and the thing blowed over. Took another name and came to San Francisco. Them as knows it don't care to hurt me, but if I should go to court there's a lot to fing."

"Do you want to see your daughter?"

"No. If she is a good girl, I shouldn't be any credit to her. Let her have the money and make her a lady."

"I'm not a bad woman, but the business ain't respectable. Better keep me out of sight."

Told more at length, Mother Nell's story was substantially this: Two brothers, named respectively James Smith and John Smith, married in Stockton the same year. The brothers were not partners, and each went his way. Their wives never met, though each knew of the other. After Mother Nell left her husband—for which step she gave no reason except that her life was hard and dull—she formed other associations and thought no more of either husband or child. When her brother-in-law lost his wife, he became reckless and dissipated. Occasionally, Mother Nell met him, and through him learned that her husband lived at Red Mountain with his daughter, and that he had occasional streaks of luck. Through him she had heard of her husband's death, but did not know that he died rich. James, the brother, led a roving life. Twice he had been reported dead, but had made narrow escapes each time. The last time Mother Nell saw him, he was intending to go to Idaho. She supposed he went. Never wrote, but dropped in on her after an absence of years as if he had been gone a day.

On the question of going to court the woman was firm. Nothing should induce her to open her mouth, and if taken there by force, she would deny all she had told him. She had no interest in the matter. Her present life suited her, and she wouldn't know what to do with the money if she had it. She wasn't going to risk being put in prison to stand trial for killing a man, or something she did not want.

The discovery of this woman was, however, a step in advance. The mist was cleared away. James Smith must be found at whatever cost.

But the case was to come up in three days. He had no new evidence to offer. It was sure to go against him. Then Mils would be legally in the care of Mrs. John Smith. Mrs. John Smith was capable of murder or any other crime to get the child out of the way.

The only chance was a motion for postponement. The motion would be opposed, but the Judge was friendly and he could safely make affidavit that important witnesses were absent, and that having used due diligence he had not yet been able to secure their attendance.

When the day came the other party were ready with their witnesses. Mrs. John Smith was in court seated near her counsel. Mr. Gray moved a postponement. The Judge looked surprised. Mrs. John Smith looked surprised. Mr. Hopp looked surprised. The spectators looked disappointed. They had come to see the performance. The Judge courteously asked on what grounds. Absent witnesses. Answer was too general. An injustice might be done to the defendant in keeping her out of the enjoyment of rights which might be legally hers. Counsel must specify what witnesses were absent and what he expected to prove.

The counsel made answer as directed. The absent witness was Mr. James Smith. He expected to prove that it was Mr. James Smith whom defendant had married. Mr. John Smith was the father of the ward of the court.

The reply had the effect of a bombshell dropped in camp. Mr. Hopp cast a furious glance at his fair client. Fair client turned deadly pale. The Judge fixed

his eye upon her for a moment and granted the motion. The case was postponed until the next term of court.

### CHAPTER XXX.

#### BOB RECEIVES HIS FRIENDS.

Bob Shaw was in court when the motion for postponement was granted. He turned, and with a boisterous "hurrah" hurried home with the welcome news.

When Mr. Gray arrived a little later the girls were expecting him. A pair of warm brown arms stole round his neck, and soft warm lips pressed a kiss upon his bearded cheek. When the brown arms were withdrawn they were succeeded by a whiter pair, but the kiss was blushing denied. Bob quietly announced his determination to enter at once the study of law.

Mr. Gray withheld from Miss the fact of the discovery of her mother. No good could, at this time, result from a meeting between mother and daughter. If the instincts of motherly love had survived in this woman, he would have deemed it his duty to bring mother and daughter together. But Mother Nell, apart from her relationship, was not a desirable acquaintance for a young girl. Coarse and sensual by nature, a dissolute life had extinguished the finer sentiments she might at one time have possessed. It was better, for a time at least, that Miss should remain in ignorance of the character of the woman to whom she was indebted for life.

Bob was to take his departure for Red Mountain the following day, and Regina had reluctantly consented to permit him to receive some of his friends at the house on that evening. Her object was two-fold: First, to leave upon his mind an impression that he was loved at home, and, second, to prevent a more riotous celebration of his departure elsewhere.

Regina dreaded the ordeal of meeting a crowd for whom she experienced a profound dislike. But her absence would be too marked a slight to be tolerated, and she nerved herself to perform the duties of hostess with seeming courtesy. With this explanation she asked Mr. Gray to be present.

Mr. Gray, of course, consented. He had a little curiosity to see assembled representatives of circles everywhere spoken of as forming a distinct class in the community.

With some consideration for his sister's prejudices, Bob had invited the least objectionable of his lady friends. Their status in society could not be easily defined. The girls were regarded as respectable in the sense in which the word is applied to their sex. At least they were not known to be otherwise. They were somewhat wild and lawless, defying the conven-

tional restraints that hold their more prudent sisters in check. Their manners were free, their talk slangy, and no considerations of propriety restrained them when there was a chance to have what they called "a good time." They were regular habitués of respectable dancing halls, and when the finances of their escorts were flourishing they would adjourn to private supper rooms in parties, and remain until long after the hour when well behaved, decorous girls ought to be in bed. In any American city but San Francisco they would have been condemned for acts of impropriety. Here judgment was held in abeyance.

Among the belles of this anomalous circle, Miss Hattie Brooks was prominent. She was pretty, graceful, and vivacious. Her parents were not only respectable, but in well-to-do circumstances. Plain, honest people, with just enough education to do business, they cared nothing for society and knew little of their daughter's associates. They believed her quite capable of taking care of herself, and gave themselves little concern as to her goings and comings. If she was out late at night she was always ready to give an account of her doings. The names of her associates were recognized as those of the sons and daughters of respectable people. Whether or not the young lady was strictly truthful in her representations to her parents, this history does not take upon itself to say.

Another more bold, brilliant, and questionable figure in this assemblage was Miss Ray Edmonds. Ray, as she was called by those who knew her and those who knew of her, was an heiress in her own right. Her father was rich, and a sister of her mother moved in the same circles of which Miss Shaw was an honored member. The young girl herself might have been a belle in the best circles if her tastes had inclined that way. But after two or three experiences in elegant parties, Miss Ray declared nothing should tempt her to endure such martyrdom again. They were dull, stupid, "pokey." Destitute of native refinement, her high animal spirits carried her into all kinds of excesses. Of course she was talked about, but this notoriety seemed to please her. If reports affecting her character reached her ears she would laugh them off without a blush or apparent sense of shame. On one occasion when told that her name was associated in a scandalous manner with that of a gentleman distinguished alike for the reserve of his deportment and great personal beauty, she replied naively, "I wish it was true."

Miss Ray was a striking figure in whatever ballroom she entered. Long, fine, lustrous red hair swept in a luminous cloud behind her nearly to her knees. Her face was pretty, but piquant rather than beautiful. Her eyes were the shade of black which is not unusual in Spanish blondes, not jetty nor brilliant, but touched with brown or red. Her complexion was fair, nose retreating, teeth perfect, and expression animated. Her manner was free and brusque. The only difficulty she seemed to understand was that of double entendre, which enabled her to say the most wicked things with the most innocent air imaginable. She had remarkably plump, handsome shoulders, and when arrayed for the ball-room, strangers unacquainted with her eccentric character were inclined to question if her dressmaker had not made an error in her measurement which the young lady had not time to correct.

Miss Ray had had scores of lovers, but none had long retained a place in her affections. The one who was in high favor to-day would be dismissed to-morrow with as little consideration as if he had been a servant. From the moment of dismissal they relapsed into the condition of friends or ordinary acquaintances. She had violent fancies, but could not be supposed capable of love. She would have been a dangerous coquette but for the utter absence of tenderness in her love-making. Such men as she could not take by storm, she could not touch.

As master of ceremonies, Bob introduced Mr. Gray to the most attractive young ladies. The young lawyer could make himself agreeable in any company, and thus, from its freshness, rather amused him. He had fallen into a very lively flirtation with Miss Hattie Brooks, to the generous Bob's extreme gratification, and was promenading with her on his arm when Miss Ray happened to observe him. Her first glance showed her that he was not "one of them." Her second that he was a rather fine-looking young man. She inferred from Miss Hattie's animated manner that he was not "pokey." Meeting Bob she asked:

"Who is that gentleman talking with Hattie?"

Bob gave the required information.

"Bring him here," she said, "I want to know him."

Bob informed Mr. Gray of the honor awaiting him. Miss Hattie uttered a warning and took the arm of a young hoodlum who came to claim her for a promised dance.

Mr. Gray suffered himself to be marched across the room and be presented to the belle of the evening. She received him with great cordiality.

"Let's get out of this," she said, taking his arm.

"Isn't there some fresh air somewhere?"

Mr. Gray thought they might find some, and they proceeded in search of it.

Passing out of the ball-room into the hall, Mr. Gray conducted his companion towards the conservatory.

"It's awful hot in there," said Miss Ray, fanning herself vigorously. "Those hoodlum boys hug so when they waltz."

"Shall I accept this as an intimation not to offend in a like manner?" asked Mr. Gray.

"Do you waltz? I have not seen you."

"No, I do not waltz."

"Then how are you going to offend in a like manner?" she asked, with a mischievous glance.

"Waltzing is a pretext. By mutual agreement the pretext might be dispensed with."

"Wouldn't it be better if I should teach you to waltz?"

"When shall I take the first lesson?"

"Now," she replied, withdrawing her hand from his arm, placing herself before him, and laying her hand on his shoulder half way round his neck. The young man, of course, could not refuse a waist so freely offered.

"But there is no music," he said.

"Wait, then; there will be soon enough."

They waited. The conviction grew firm in Mr. Gray's mind that the characteristic of hoodlum dancing of which the young lady had complained was not

entirely the fault of the male of that variety of the species.

"Do you think you shall like waltzing?" she asked.

"I can't think; but the first position is not unpleasant."

There was another pause. As there was no music they could not do otherwise than wait.

"Mr. Gray," she said after a while, "you are a huge fraud."

"What reasons have you for that opinion?"

"I never give reasons. I feel it."

"Nothing can be more conclusive," he said.

"Nothing," she sighed.

Mr. Gray was devising ways and means of escape with some shreds of reputation when feminine voices were heard in the hall, calling:

"Ray, Ray, where are you?"

"The deuce take those girls," exclaimed Ray, "they ought to know better than to follow us in here."

"But they don't," replied Mr. Gray, greatly relieved, "for here they come."

Miss Ray made a concession to propriety, rather because she found her waist released than from considerations of self. When the girls bounded into the conservatory the occupants were very decorously engaged in a critical discussion on plants.

"Come, Ray, said one of the girls, "you mustn't brow off on Tommie. He's looking everywhere for you."

"If he'd looked in here," replied Ray, coolly, "he'd found me."

"Well, I'll tell him you are here."

"Tell him, also, that I shan't dance with him."

"O, Ray, that's mean."

"When I leave a ball-room," responded Ray, "I leave it because I choose to be somewhere else."

"O," said the girl, saucily, looking up to Mr. Gray, "if that's the way the cat jumps, I've nothing more to say. Please excuse me," and she curtsied extravagantly and disappeared.

Miss Ray turned, doubtless intending to continue the lesson the preliminaries of which had been rehearsed so successfully, but Mr. Gray took her hand, and drew it through his arm.

"If I am a huge fraud," he said, "I would rather no one but you should know it. Now you are discovered, we shall have no peace."

"But you must pay for this lesson, Mr. Gray, I am ready to give it."

"What is the forfeit?"

"Supper at Marchand's."

"Supper for two?"

"Have you any friends you want to invite?"

"No."

"Neither have I."

Mr. Gray was reckless of engagements so that he got off without seeming to fly. Arrangements were made for "supper for two."

The elan of this assault rather intimidated the young lawyer. The gait of the fair Ray was a shade too fast to suit the pace he had determined to go. He was in fact so completely demoralized that for the remainder of the evening he sought the protection of Miss Shaw.

The party was regarded by the guests as a great social success. The girls declared that they had a splendid time. At parting all kissed Bob good-by, all but Miss Hattie, who reserved that ceremony for a later hour.

Reginia and Mr. Gray stood on the doorstep and saw the last of their guests depart. Miss had retired and they were alone."

"Bob must never ask this of me again," said Reginia. "It is too much!"

"You are right," replied Mr. Gray. "It is too much."

"I thought you seemed amused."

"Amused, yes. But if I had a sister, I should rather she would not be amused in the same way."

"And yet I am Bob's sister and he loves me in his rough way."

"Bob loves you without doubt. He would shed his last drop of blood in your defense or lay down his life to serve you. His heart is not bad, but he is too heedless and inconsiderate to be a guide for you."

"Yet he is all I have."

"Not quite all, Miss Shaw."

"I mean—at least I didn't mean—to undervalue your friendship. But friends, you know, are not relatives. We are together to-day; to-morrow we may be apart."

"I hope not, Reginia."

"I hope not. I don't know what we should do without you. You've been the best friend to me a lone girl ever had."

She spoke with feeling and her beautiful eyes raised to his face were eloquent with affection. He murmured some reassuring words in reply, raised her hand to his lips and bade her good night.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE SPIRITUAL TELEGRAPH.

At four the next afternoon Bob took his departure for Red Mountain. Reginia, Miss, and Mr. Gray accompanied him to the boat to see him off.

"Look out for the little one," said Bob as he shook Mr. Gray's hand. "I know that crowd better than you do."

"I dare say, but I shall try to keep Miss from their clutches."

Reginia had never loved her brother so well as at this moment. He looked so manly, so handsome, so much like a gentleman, that at the last moment she had half a mind to intercede with Mr. Gray to have Bob remain in the city. But the signal was given for "all ashore," and Mr. Gray took her hand to lead her away. She kissed her brother tenderly, made him promise to be "good," and tore herself away.

On the wharf they waited till the boat pushed out in the stream. Faces became indistinct.

but the waving of handkerchiefs transmitted a last and a last farewell.

Miss stood quietly gazing at the retreating form of her friend, and unconsciously drew closer to Mr. Gray and put her hand in his. He was left to her, but Reginia stood a little apart, her graceful figure distinctly outlined against the blue expanse of water."

Reginia turned at last, tears in her beautiful eyes, and her glance fell upon her two companions. Something in the attitude of the two, in the tender care of the one and the trusting love of the other, awoke a painful thrill in her heart. They were nearer and dearer to each other than she could be to either.

Mr. Gray acceded to Mrs. Shaw's request to pass the night at the house. The departure of Bob left them without a male protector, and Mrs. Shaw was nervous and timid.

Ten days passed. Though retaining his room at the hotel, Mr. Gray became in effect a member of Mrs. Shaw's family.

One morning the place of Miss at the table was vacant. Reginia ran up stairs to call her, but soon returned, pale, with a wild look in her eyes. The room of Miss was also vacant.

The newspaper dropped from Mr. Gray's hand. Without a word he passed Reginia at the door, went up stairs and entered the room where Miss had slept.

The bed had been slept in, but there were no signs of unusual disorder. Her dresses were hanging in the closet, and her trinkets on the table. Nothing seemed to be missing but the child herself.

The house was searched, the servants questioned, doors examined, but no clue was discovered to her mysterious disappearance. The servants averred that they had heard no noise in the house, and that no one had entered after the family retired.

But one fact remained, Miss could not be found. Not a trace could be discovered, not a word or a scrap of paper to indicate why or how she had gone, where or with whom she proposed to go. The little dirk-knife was found open under the pillow, an assurance, if one had been wanting, that she had not gone of her own will.

An hour later, the telegraph was conveying messages on every line of travel from the city, authorizing the arrest of any person who should be found in company with a girl answering the description of Miss. Detectives were set at work, stimulated with gold and promises of large rewards in the event of discovering the missing child.

Mr. Gray returned home at midnight with no news of any assuring character. A score of vagrant girls had been brought to the police-office, but no Miss.

In the next ten days every means of tracing the young girl or her abductors were exhausted. The search proved fruitless. Mr. Gray was forced to the conclusion that Miss had either been carried on board a ship bound for some foreign port, and thus out of the reach of the telegraph, or that she was securely secreted in some part of the city.

Meanwhile Mrs. Smith was not idle. She complained loudly at the loss of her child. The accusations that she had made in confidence were now made openly. Mr. Gray himself was the abductor. Mr. Gray, alarmed at the probable consequences of

his guilty intimacy with the girl, had hidden her away.

Related to those who knew neither Mr. Gray nor Miss, there was a seeming foundation for her accusation. The meeting of Miss and Mr. Gray in the latter's office was tortured to meet the enemy's purposes. Tim could be produced as a witness of the meeting. The act of placing her in Mr. Shaw's family was a blind. The man could not brave public opinion by taking the child openly under his immediate protection. And then Robert Shaw, whose knowledge of the city might prove troublesome, was sent into the country.

Mr. Gray then takes up his residence at the house of Mrs. Shaw. Himself in the same house, her removal could be easily effected. He could unbolt doors when the household were asleep, and walk forth with his victim. He could return after placing her in a secure hiding-place, and be present at the discovery of her flight. How else could an entrance be effected into a carefully secured house without leaving a trace of the means by which ingress was attained.

These representations were made to Dr. Fox and others. Dr. Fox was too conscientious a man to give authority to a story which he really believed to be false, but in this case the woman's view was plausible. He felt a little hurt at Mr. Gray's manner to himself, and the humiliation of the retraction he had been forced to make was still fresh in his mind. His religion had not raised him above the conditions of humanity. He was far more ready to believe than if he and Mr. Gray had never met.

Dr. Fox presented Mrs. Smith's statement to Mrs. Shaw. Mrs. Shaw presented it to her daughter. Reginia did not, for a moment, believe it true, but she could not prove it false. Perhaps her mind was not free from the effects of certain affairs which had come to her knowledge in which very estimable gentlemen had behaved very wickedly. Men who were the soul of honor in all other points were sometimes treacherous in their relations with women.

The treatment of Mr. Gray for Miss was at least romantic. He had once spoken of running away with Miss, to save her from her mother. True, he spoke jestingly, but might there not lurk a purpose beneath his jest? Despairing of obtaining the child by legal means, might he not have resorted to those illegal? She could not bring herself to believe he had acted so treacherously, but, at times, when beset by his enemies, doubts would intrude into her mind.

One day her old admirer, Mr. Hopp, called to see her. His visit was ostensibly in the interest of his client, Mrs. Smith, but it afforded an opportunity he had long been waiting for. As their conversation became confidential he addressed her as an old friend. He had loved and respected her father. He loved and respected her, and desired above all things, her welfare. He spoke highly of Mr. Gray as a man and as a lawyer. Reginia felt her heart sink as this cool, reasoner and close observer assumed, as a matter beyond doubt, that Mr. Gray knew just where to find Miss. He defended his course entirely in secreting her.

Though Mrs. Smith was his client he could not shut his eyes to the fact that her associations were bad. How far she was in the power of the unscrupulous men with whom she had at one time been connected

he had no means of knowing, but if he were attached to Miss, as Mr. Gray, was he should not like to see her fall into her mother's hands. He spoke now as a friend of Mr. Gray, not as a lawyer. He spoke also as a friend of Miss Shaw. He had advised Mr. Gray to do precisely what Mr. Gray had done. He would not like to have the fact known, but he admitted it in confidence to Miss Shaw.

Reginia's faith in Mr. Gray was a little shaken. Now that it was to appear that Mr. Gray's conduct in secreting Miss might be justified in a measure by the circumstances of the case, she was less sure of his entire innocence. But it placed Mr. Gray in a new position with regard to herself. If Miss was living in secret under his protection he must purpose one or two things—to make her his wife when he could do so legally, or to make her his mistress. The former was the more probable. Mr. Gray then must be regarded as a married man.

What was it to her? Nothing. There had been no love passages between them. Mr. Gray had a right to marry whom he pleased. But the thought gave her pain. Their associations of late had become very intimate. The delicacy with which he had come to her assistance at the death of her father had appealed to her finer sensibilities. It caused her to regard him as something more than a friend. It had opened her heart more readily than years of courtship. It afforded her an insight into his nature that few women obtain of the man they marry. The friendship thus cemented had gone on without interruption. She turned naturally to him for everything. His presence gave her courage, strength, peace. She looked for him at night as if he was her lover. She was a weak girl, always accustomed to dependence, and Mr. Gray had the quiet strength of character that she most admired.

The young girl, in fact, just discovered that she was in love when she discovered that her love was hopeless. She had a secret now of her own to guard from his eyes.

Mr. Gray came to her one night with a singular proposition. He had heard of a spiritual medium of remarkable power whom he proposed to visit. He did not believe in spiritualism, but it was evident that there were forces at work beyond our present powers of comprehension.

These forces might be spirits or they might be magnetic currents conveying thought by some process to us unknown. That a knowledge of existing facts had been conveyed from one point of the earth to another by some secret intelligence, was a fact only the ignorant denied. Was it not possible some news of the missing Miss might thus be obtained?

"Have you ever visited this lady?" asked Reginia.

"No; but I have conversed with several gentlemen who have. She has given such remarkable tests that I am inclined to see if she can solve the mystery that surrounds Miss."

"It happens that I know her. I went to see her with a number of friends, more than a year ago. It is a very dangerous experiment," she continued, with a quick glance at his face.

"Why so?"

"Why, I have reason to believe that they sometime

tell what people are saying without regard to the truth."

"The evidence of these intelligences, which we will call spirits for the convenience of the term, should be subjected to the same rules as evidences given here on earth. Any spirit can identify himself to his friends, and if he fails to do so, he is not entitled to belief."

"Then you are not afraid to hear what they may say?"

"Not in the least. Why should I be?"

Regina thought that if he really knew where Miss Shaw was, he was subjecting himself to a hazardous test. She was pleased, however, at the proposition, and made haste to accompany him.

The medium lived at North Beach, in a pretty residence commanding a fine view of the bay. They entered through a garden of shrubs and flowers, and rang at the bell.

The door was opened by a gentleman of peculiar and marked physiognomy. Its chief beauty was a pair of gray eyes full of magnetism and intelligence. He recognized Miss Shaw at a glance, having been present at her interview the year before. He welcomed them cordially, and conducted them into a small sitting-room where a beautiful blonde lady, apparently not more than twenty years of age, was sitting with two children at her feet.

Mrs. Rhodes, the medium, also recognized Miss Shaw, and called her by name. Mr. Gray was introduced, and after half an hour spent in conversation, Mr. Gray made known the object of his visit.

"Certainly," said Mrs. Rhodes. "There is a number of people here who want to speak to you."

"People?" repeated Mr. Gray.

"Ghosts, if you prefer to call them so. They are so real to us that we speak of them as people."

"Do you see them?"

"Sometimes, under favorable circumstances. But I feel them whenever they enter the room."

"Why," said Regina, "I should think you would be afraid."

"Afraid? what of?"

"Of the ghosts."

"Are you afraid of Mr. Gray now?"

"No," replied Regina.

"Why are you not? He is a man, and much stronger than you."

"Yes, true," replied the young lady, "but I know he doesn't wish to hurt me."

"Well, suppose he should die to-night and come here as a ghost to-morrow night. Would he want to harm you then?"

"No, of course he would not."

"Then why should you be afraid of his ghost?"

Regina had no answer.

"You must allow something for the influence of education, Mrs. Rhodes," said Mr. Gray. "We are taught in childhood to fear ghosts."

"And a lot of other damned nonsense," said Mr. Rhodes.

"Leave off the big words, Harry," remarked Mrs. Rhodes, smiling pleasantly. "Miss Shaw isn't used to them."

"Excuse me," said Mr. Rhodes, "but I got hot on that subject. There's a lot of damned——"

"Let us give the ghosts a chance," interrupted Mrs. Rhodes. "Harry has but one fault. He will swear in spite of all I can do."

"Yes," admitted Mr. Rhodes; "it is a habit I fell into when I was mate of a ship. A man may get along on shore without swearing, but it's no use trying it at sea."

The children were now put to bed, and preparations made for a sitting. A small table was placed in the centre of the room, Mr. and Mrs. Rhodes sitting opposite to each other, Mr. Gray and Miss Shaw in the same relative position.

The lights were then removed and the shutters carefully closed.

"O," exclaimed Regina, growing nervous, "I'm afraid."

"Mr. Gray," said Mrs. Rhodes, "go round and sit with Miss Shaw. If she feels your arm round her waist she won't be afraid."

Mr. Gray obeyed, and no further complaints of that nature were heard.

"Do you see any lines on the table?" asked Mrs. Rhodes.

No one saw anything.

"I see little, fine electrical lights playing all over it. In a moment these lights will take shape and form letters and words. As fast as one word is read it disappears, and another word succeeds."

"Do you know what causes these lights?" asked Mr. Gray.

"It is a way the spirits have adopted of communicating their ideas."

"Do you ever see the spirits as they cause the lines to appear?"

"Very often, but not always."

"Can you distinguish one spirit from another?"

"As readily as you can tell one woman from another."

"But if a strange spirit appears—one you have never seen—"

"Sometimes I have a consciousness what it is. Sometimes it is presented by a spirit I know. Again it comes as a stranger and remains such until we get acquainted."

"Then you have no positive means of identification?"

"No; they identify themselves. The electrical lines are now forming words. Listen."

There was a moment of silence, and then Mrs. Rhodes began:

"R-e-g-i-s."

"That's me," exclaimed Miss Shaw, in a flutter of surprise and fear.

"Please give your name," said Mrs. Rhodes, addressing the table.

"I don't need to give my name. My little princess will know me."

"Why," exclaimed Regina, starting to her feet.

"That is papa. No one else calls me, 'my little princess!'"

The table responded by a vigorous tip.

"Are you Miss Shaw's father?" asked Mrs. Rhodes.

"Yes."

"How long since you passed away?"

"On the twentieth of November."

"Is that correct, Miss Shaw?"

Regina was too much overcome to reply. She clung trembling and half fainting to Mr. Gray.

"My dear," said Mrs. Rhodes, soothingly, "if this is your father you need not be afraid of him."

"But it is so strange," murmured the young lady.

"There's nothing strange about it," said Mr. Rhodes. "Your father wants to talk with you just as much as if you could see him."

Regina, still trembling and apprehensive, resumed her seat.

"If this young lady is your daughter," said Mrs. Rhodes, addressing the table, "you will tell her something that will convince her who speaks."

"Yes; I will repeat the last words she ever spoke to me. Do you remember them, Regie?"

"Yes," faintly answered the young lady.

"You were standing on the door-step at the time. I was going to my office."

"Yes; I remember."

"You kissed me good-by, and said: 'Bring Mr. Gray home to dinner.'"

"That is true," replied Regina, more calmly. "Papa was not well, and I thought——"

"Thought you'd like to have Mr. Gray in the house," interrupted Mrs. Rhodes. "There is no harm in that."

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### LIGHT FROM DARKNESS.

Mr. Gray had sat in silence during this scene. The manifestation was new to him and it impressed him deeply, but his habits of careful inquiry into evidence of all kinds led him to seek an explanation from any source but that which seemed to offer itself. He had never heard Mr. Shaw address his daughter as "my little princess," but it was within the bounds of possibility that some other person had, and prepared a scene in furtherance of some design which he could not penetrate.

The table from which Mrs. Rhodes read or seemed to read the electrical words was a perfect blank to him. In fact, in the darkness he could not see the table at all, but the sense of touch furnished ample proof that it was there.

"Do you recognize me, Mr. Shaw?" he now asked.

"Yes, John, I am never mistaken in a face."

"Do you remember the last words you spoke to me?"

"These are the last words I spoke on earth:—"

"They have no one else!"

The lawyer wiped the perspiration from his brow. The scene in the office rose up before him, when Mr. Shaw, in the grasp of death, had bequeathed his family to him to support.

Regina's hand crept softly into his, and her head rested on his shoulder.

"It is papa," she whispered; "I know it is."

But the lawyer could not have all his preconceived

notions upset so suddenly. Intellectual dignity would not permit a surrender of the fortifications education had erected. He continued his questions.

"Of what disease did you die?"

"A lawyer should be more precise in his language. I did not die at all."

"Well, then, what caused you to pass from earth?"

"I am still on earth. I come to the office every day and assist you as much as I ever did, though in a different way. With the aid of a friend of mine, I am going to help you win a case that you would lose without me."

"What case?"

"That of Melissa Smith."

"Do you know where she is?"

"I know where my friend says she is."

"Where?"

"At sea."

"In what vessel?"

"The Sea-Nymph, bound for New York. She will stop at Valparaiso."

"Who is with her?"

"A man named James O'Neil."

"I have never heard of him."

"He is a friend of Waters."

"Did she go away of her own accord?"

"No. She was chloroformed and carried off."

"By O'Neil?"

"The plan was arranged by Mrs. Smith, Waters, and O'Neil. Waters and O'Neil entered the house and carried her off."

"How did they get in?"

"A man sleeping in the house let them in."

"There was no man in the house but myself."

"You are mistaken."

"I am positive. I looked and bolted the doors myself between the hours of twelve and one at night."

"Well, you bolted the man in, and went to bed yourself."

"I looked everywhere, for Rob had warned me that an attempt would be made to carry Miss off."

"Did you look in the room of Janet, the chamber-maid?"

"No."

"The man who let them in is Janet's lover."

"Thank you. We have come to something now that is susceptible of proof."

"You must be cautious how you proceed. Janet is silly. She only admits her lover when she thinks she may do so with safety."

"Do you know the man's name?"

"She calls him Jake."

"I have seen him," said Regina, "but I didn't suspect—"

"Did Janet know that Jake admitted these men?"

"No. She was asleep. The affair was conducted without noise. The men were not in the house more than five minutes."

"Do you know what they intend to do with Miss?"

"O'Neil intends to marry her. They would kill her and have her out of the way but for one consideration!"

"What is that?"

"If James Smith should be found it will be proven that Mrs. Smith is not the widow of John Smith, but the divorced wife of James Smith."



"I understand. She, having no rights as widow, the estate will fall to Miss?"

"Yes."

"Do you know where James Smith is?"

"I do not; my friend does."

"Who is your friend?"

"John Smith. He calls himself 'Old Bummer Smith.'"

"The father of Miss?"

"Yes."

"Where did you meet him?"

"He was prowling round the house, and after a time I understood he was the father of Miss."

"Will he tell me where to find James Smith?"

"He says he will make James Smith find you."

"How can he?"

"By impressions. Some morning James Smith will wake up and suddenly conclude that he wants to go to San Francisco. He doesn't know why, but the idea gets fixed in his mind. He starts and in due time comes here. He will go at once to see his sister-in-law, and she will send him to you."

"Can I depend upon his coming?"

"Yes. What made you come here to-night?"

"I hardly know. Some friends suggested it as a possible means of getting information."

"That is it. I made them speak to you. Then, when you scouted the idea, I fixed it in your mind. I made you go for Regie, because—"

"Well, because?"

"There is no harm in your knowing: Regie had been told so often that you know where Miss is, that she did not know what to believe."

"I believe I am suspected of having secreted the child myself."

"Yes. Knowing that Mrs. Smith had designs against her life, you would have done right if you had."

"According to your present philosophy, Mr. Shaw, a man is but a puppet to do the bidding of other intelligences."

"To an extent he is. Man thinks too much of himself. He is often but an agent when he thinks he is the great I Am."

"What is the difference between a good and a bad man?"

"A difference of temperament and organization. We choose tools suited to our purpose. If I should want a wicked deed performed, I should choose as an agent a man easily moved to such deeds. Some men are so constituted by nature, so inclined by education and association, that they cannot be made use of to accomplish evil purposes. Such men attract, and are influenced by spirits of a similar character to themselves."

"What determines the nature of a man to be good or bad?"

"Parentage has something to do with it. But more than anything else, the mental and physical condition of the parents during the period of union which produces offspring. Thus, the same parents may give birth to children of totally different natures, owing to their mode of life, habit of thought, and the influence of association during the months preceding the birth of either. But these questions we will discuss at another time."

When you get away from here you will be involved in doubt. A mind trained as yours is cannot readily accept new principles. You want evidence. You seek to account for what you call phenomena on principles already known to yourself. You are right. Seek. Search. Call science to your aid. You are wrong only when you abandon investigation, leaving facts unaccounted for. In the end, you must accept the solution offered, or furnish one yourself."

The electrical light ceased and the medium sank back in her chair.

"Well," said Mr. Rhodes, after a pause, "I suppose you think my wife a mighty smart woman?"

"I am willing to admit that Mrs. Rhodes is a lady of great intelligence, but in this matter, I understand, she repeats what others write."

"No," said Mr. Rhodes, "she makes it all up herself."

"But how could she know?" asked Regina, "the last words I said to my father?"

"There's where the smartness comes in. Any of us can repeat what we hear. My wife repeats what she never heard."

"But," urged Regina, "I can't understand—"

"Mr. Rhodes is jesting," said the medium. "So many people come here and receive tests similar to those you have received, then go away and say that I made it up, that he gets out of patience. As for me, people may think what they please. I sit for my own amusement. When friends come it helps pass a pleasant evening. If they choose to give me credit for such fertility of invention it does not hurt my feelings in the least."

"Then you don't care to make converts?"

"I wouldn't cross the street to convert the whole world."

"But you have no doubt yourself," said Mr. Gray, "but that you converse with the spirits of people who have lived on earth."

"I have no doubt, but no other can have the same evidence. You, for instance, are trying to construct a theory which accounts for the phenomena on known principles. You object to spirits. They were not a part of your education. You say that some force in nature conveys intelligence from mind to mind. I agree with you, with this difference: your force, acting in obedience to natural laws, is unconscious of its action. It acts as flowers grow, because it cannot help it. My force is an intelligent one. It acts with a purpose and with calculation. You call your force electricity. I call mine spirits. If no intelligence was used in the conveyance of intelligence, your blind, unintelligent force might do, but, as you have seen to-night, there is intelligence. Why do these intelligences speak to you, rather than to the first person who may come, of Melissa Smith and James Smith? Simply because, as I assume, you are interested in these persons. There is intelligence, you see, in the selection."

"Your reasoning is logical, Mrs. Rhodes, if not unanswerable. But when we reflect that the same natural laws that exist now have always existed, we naturally inquire why we now perceive for the first time these manifestations of their working."

"We do not know that these manifestations do ap-

pear for the first time. Fifty years ago, for less than you have seen to-night, I should have been tried as a sorceress in league with the powers of darkness. Perhaps your good church people would have had me burnt at the stake. What would be the consequence, if I saw spirits I should keep the fact to myself. If I saw letters written on my table which no one else could see, I should be very careful about reading them, even to an intelligent and liberal man like you."

"But at present," put in Mr. Rhodes, "we have substituted insane asylums for the stake. This is a step in advance."

"Fortunately," said Mr. Gray, "insane asylums, for sane people, are going out of fashion. But to-night one test has been given which is susceptible of proof. If this Jake admitted into Mrs. Shaw's house the man who carried off Miss Smith, we shall be able to fasten the act upon him."

"You must remember, Mr. Gray, that we are not responsible for the intelligence that claims to be Mr. Shaw. We do not know whether it was Mr. Shaw or some person personating him. There are two chances of failure. First, the intelligence claiming to be Mr. Shaw may not be Mr. Shaw at all, but some mischievous person who wants a little fun at our expense. Second, you cannot always prove a fact. Jake may be guilty and you not able to prove it."

"But may not similar objections be urged against all communications?"

"No; sometimes we receive communications from spirits we know and can vouch for. Mr. Shaw we do not know. I do not know that I ever saw him in life, and he does not come accompanied by any spirit that we do know. Again, the value of these communications does not depend upon their serviceability as a police force. They may have higher purposes to serve than tracking criminals."

"You must remember, also," said Mr. Rhodes, "that every man or woman, however criminal or degraded, has spirit friends. If spirits lend themselves to harass mortals, the spirit friends of these mortals will protect them."

At this point in the discussion the electrical lights began to play upon the table. After a little hesitation, the medium said:

"Here comes our old friend, Paul Wentworth. Good evening, Mr. Wentworth."

She then introduced Mr. Wentworth precisely as if he had been in the body and had entered the room. She then read:

"I have listened to this discussion with much interest. We do not often allow ourselves to be employed as detectives, but when a real good is to be gained we may do so. I come especially to say to you that I was present when the spirit you infer to be Mr. Shaw was writing, and I can vouch for his identity. I knew him when on earth, as he frequently attended a circle where I was an occasional visitor."

"Ask him if papa is happy," said Regina to Mrs. Rhodes.

"You may ask him," replied the medium; "He will answer you."

She then read: "Mr. Shaw seems happy and contented. He has been much concerned about your brother, but is less so at present."

"Was papa a Spiritualist?" asked Regina.

"In conviction he was. He rarely spoke on the subject as Mrs. Shaw was bitterly opposed to the theory. I will not occupy your time now but come and have a talk with you when you have caught Jake."

The electrical lights again ceased, and as the sitting had been protracted, lights were brought into the room.

After half an hour spent in conversation, Mr. Gray and Regina rose to go. Mr. Gray with some hesitation laid a good coin on the mantel as payment for the services rendered. The medium, however, without any show of being offended, handed it back.

"We don't receive fees," she said pleasantly. "We give sittings only when it pleases us to do so."

"In that case you prohibit me from seeking information from the same source again."

"By no means. Come whenever you like. If it is not agreeable to sit, we will tell you so. If I took money I should feel that I was under a kind of obligation to sit for all who came."

"You have many visitors, I presume?"

"A good many, but we might have more. We are consulted not only by foolish women, as you doubtless suppose, but by physicians, lawyers, stockbrokers, merchants and everybody but clergymen."

"Then clergymen do not consult you?"

"Never. We cannot help their business. They have things so fixed that they only want to be let alone."

Receiving a cordial invitation to come again, Mr. Gray and Regina passed out into the street.

"Well," said Mr. Gray, "we are still on earth. I recognize the locality."

"Did you imagine yourself in the other world?"

"Not, exactly; but this is the most unromantic ghostly interview I ever heard of. It was lucky for Shakespeare that he lived before our time. Here are no incantations, no blue and red flame, no sulphurous odor, no weird forest, but a very charming woman and a jolly sort of a man, as the sole interpreters of the world of spirits."

"All this is very strange. Do you really believe it was papa who spoke?"

"I believe less to-night than I ever did in my life. Most of us have been under the impression that we knew something, but I doubt to-night if I ever knew anything at all. Let us live in the world a couple of days, and then if you please we will talk this matter over."

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## JANET.

Janet was employed in Mrs. Shaw's family to make herself generally useful. She was now to serve as an experiment. This line of usefulness was not in her original compact of service, but it must be urged in justification of the experimenters that she was suspected of having volunteered in a domestic role entirely foreign to the proper performance of the duties for which she was engaged.

Mr. Gray had often seen Janet, but he had never really looked at her. She had appeared to him as an every-day sort of person, young and passably pretty, but not in any way designed to arrest the attention of a well-regulated masculine mind.

The next day he brought a little more intelligence to bear upon an examination of the chambermaid. He discovered a plump, well-developed person, quiet if not stealthy in movement, a face remarkable only for the extreme pallor of its complexion, eyes which withdrew their gaze when they met other eyes, leaving an impression that they were extremely reticent eyes, and might be made useful to their owner on occasion.

As a result of this examination two special policemen were detailed to exercise the proverbial vigilance of their profession in the locality of Mrs. Shaw's residence, especially between the hours of eleven in the evening and four in the morning.

Leaving the house in this efficient guardianship, Mr. Gray returned to his hotel.

The specials reported every day, but for eleven days their report was brief. They had discovered nothing. Mr. Gray was left to infer that there was nothing to discover, though the fresh and amiable countenances of the specials awoke the unworthy suspicion that the vigilance of his agents were directed to the selfish pursuits of their own comfort.

Acting under this unworthy suspicion, he intimated to the efficient guardians of the peace that after two nights their services would be dispensed with. Mr. Gray's faith in spirit agencies was rapidly waning, possibly however because he had placed so much faith in human agencies.

But the following night, at the dread hour which spirits are said to prepare for a terrestrial rattle, a knock sounded on Mr. Gray's parlor door. When the door was opened, one of the vigilant specials stood in the aperture.

"Got him," he said. "Safe."

Mr. Gray took his hat, overcoat and pistol, and the two proceeded toward the residence of Mrs. Shaw. On the way Mr. Gray was informed that at a quarter past eleven a man entered the premises through the rear gate, and had not reappeared at the expiration of half an hour. One special remained to watch the premises a while the other went to inform Mr. Gray.

Arrived at the place of their destination the waiting special informed them that the man had not reappeared. He had been in the house more than an hour.

Mr. Gray had means of entrance without disturbing the family. Leaving one policeman outside, he entered the house with the other. The two servants had separate rooms over the kitchen, which were approached by staircases both in front and back of the house.

The two men ascended the back stairs, and Mr. Gray knocked gently at Janet's door. The knock called forth no response. He knocked again, still gently but with more emphasis. The policy of masterly inactivity still prevailed within the room. He knocked a third time. A moment after the door was opened just enough to disclose a pale face and two shining eyes.

"Dress yourself, Janet."

The face grew paler, the eyes more shining.

"Don't ask questions. Dress yourself. In ten minutes I will come again."

Mr. Gray retired, thinking the nocturnal visitor might avail himself of the opportunity to make his escape. He anticipated the nocturnal visitor's movements correctly. In two minutes Janet's pale face looked into the hall, and seeing all clear, a dark form emerged, descending the back stairs, opened the kitchen door and stepped out to find itself covered by two pistols in the hands of two vigilant guardians of the peace.

The man threw up his hands in sign of surrender. The policemen took him in charge. Mr. Gray again ascended to Janet's door, and gently knocked. The door was opened promptly and Janet, dressed as usual, stood before him.

"I beg you will excuse me for disturbing you," he said, in his mildest tone; "it was a false alarm."

Janet looked at him a second, and then her eyes dropped, and a blush overspread her face.

"Don't be frightened, Janet. There is no danger whatever. You need not tell Mr. or Miss Shaw to-morrow that I was here to-night."

The girl regarded him half defiantly, yet with an appealing look in the depths of her eyes. The young man again assured her she had nothing to fear. Then her regard became softer. Her eyes dropped, and rested a moment on a neat foot that protruded from beneath her dark dress. Then the eyelids raised slowly, and the pretty chambermaid stole an upward glance at the face of her judge.

"I want to see you to-morrow, Janet," he said. "Can you call at the office at four?"

She smiled now and blushed. In her mind the result of an interview that seemed so threatening was not unnatural. One offense might be condoned by another.

Mr. Gray understood very well that if Janet had ever regarded him as a man of unapproachable majesty, he was sinking rapidly in her estimation. It was better, however, for his purpose that the girl should arrive at a conclusion only partially justified by what had occurred. There would be a chance to retrieve himself on the morrow.

Bidding Janet "good-night" in a tone that greatly relieved her apprehensions, Mr. Gray descended to the

street. He found the two policemen holding in a close if not affectionate embrace a brawny fellow, quite as well adapted to the service of Mars as that of Venus. He had the limbs of a young Hercules, the face of a satyr. Faith in spirits was again in the ascendant. The distinction such a fellow would make between opening a door to burglars and opening a tender maiden's jugular vein would be one of price.

The young Hercules was walked down to Mr. Gray's office between his captors. The gas was lighted, the young fellow introduced into the lawyer's private office, the two policemen standing guard outside the door.

Mr. Gray invited his visitor to a seat. The former was not a timid man, but his proverbial equanimity was sustained somewhat on this occasion by the knowledge that payment had not been made to his auxiliaries for the service already rendered. The system of tactics would unquestionably insure their aid in an emergency.

"Seems to me yer're making a mighty fuss about nothing," muttered Hercules. "Spect I ain't the first fellow that has been caught sparking a pretty girl."

"Is your memory of dates pretty good, Jake?" asked the lawyer, quietly.

"How d'ye know my name's Jake?" asked the fellow, with a little apprehension in his eyes.

"You are here to answer questions, not to ask them. Is your memory of dates pretty good?"

"Yes, from fair to middling. Don't keep a dilly."

"You can tell, perhaps, on what evenings in the past month you called to see your friend Janet."

"I put it to you as a gentleman," said Jake, with an injured air, "if you ought to take an advantage of circumstances to ask such questions."

"Please to answer as correctly as possible. It may stimulate your memory, perhaps, if you know that I have a little memorandum before me, and that it will be much to your advantage if your recollection tallies with that memorandum."

"Heckens I've dropped in once a week or thereabouts."

To-day is the fourteenth of May. What was the date of your last previous visit?"

"Don't remember exactly. P'raps a week ago."

"If you cannot remember dates with more precision, I have nothing more to say to you. The gentlemen outside will conduct you to the office of the Chief of Police."

"Don't be hard on a feller, Mr. Gray. Yer're a young man yourself."

"I believe I am not the party under arrest."

"What for do yer want to scare a fellow for? Tint a San Quentin affair, no how."

"You are mistaken in that, Jake. It is a San Quentin affair."

The air of assurance the young fellow had assumed was tempered somewhat by this opinion, which, coming from a lawyer, might be regarded as at least semi-legal.

"Suppose'n I remember dates, what then?" he asked.

"In that case, if you remember correctly, and give a faithful account of events which took place on one

of these nights—events which will not compromise your friend more than she is already compromised—you will have my influence exerted in your behalf instead of against you. It will probably make a difference of three years in your residence at San Quentin."

"Won't split on anybody, unless I'm off soot free," said Jake doggedly.

Mr. Gray touched a bell, and one of the policemen opened the door.

"Conduct this young man to the Chief's office."

Jake sprang to his feet and seemed to calculate the chances of an encounter. They were three to one, and they had pistols.

"Yer damned rough on a feller," he muttered.

"What do you want to know, anyhow?"

"I have asked you what I want to know."

"Well, send that mousing cop out of the room."

The lawyer made a sign and the officer retired.

"I have nothing to do with your love affairs, Jake."

"I don't want to know in what part of the house you were, but on what nights. Make haste, now, for it is past my usual hour for retiring."

Jake gave five dates, but neither of them was the night of the disappearance of Miss Shaw.

"You have not answered correctly, Jake. You were there on the twenty-first of April."

The observant eye of the lawyer detected a change in the ruffian's face. At this moment he more than half believed in spirits.

"I don't think I was," he muttered.

"I know you were. On that night the doors of Mrs. Shaw's house were opened to two ruffians who carried off a young girl who happened to be my ward."

"That cock won't fight, Mr. Gray. Everybody says you carried off the girl, 'cause things wasn't handy at Shaw's house, and now you want to fasten it on me."

"I've heard all I want from you, Jake. You must go to prison, and I'll do my utmost to keep you in secure retirement for the next ten years."

"If you do I'll kill you afore I've been out a week."

"Two or three others who will be out before you have sworn to do the same thing."

"Tell yer what, Mr. Gray, we'd better not go agin one another. You might miss, and then yer wouldn't have much time for prayers. If yer'll let up on me I'll tell yer in confidence, 'cause you can't use what I say as evidence against me."

"That's true, Jake. But I know who bribed you to open the doors. I know who the parties are and where to find one of them. I know, too, that this man is an arrant coward. I'll tell you in confidence that one of the names he is known by is Waters."

"Spect yer knows all about it then," said Jake, coolly. "Don't know how yer found it out. Janet didn't know."

"I know she didn't. Janet was rather imprudent than guilty."

"Well, since yer knows so much there's no use in keeping a close mouth. I did open the door, but Waters swore he didn't mean to harm the girl. He said you were keeping her for yourself."

"And he gave you a nice little sum to believe in his lies. If you had thought of it you'd have found me a more liberal paymaster than he."

"Perhaps I would. Couldn't count on that. Think of you next time."

"Do so. You are free."

Jake opened his small eyes in astonishment.

"You are free," repeated Mr. Gray. "If you are wise you will be of more use to me outside a prison than in."

"Well, you are a gentleman, after all. Hope you won't be hard on Janet."

"Janet will probably find some more congenial place of service. If you have any regard for her, or any desire to retain a place in her affections, you will say nothing of the events of this night."

"Rock on! I won't. Isn't anything to blow about—for me?"

Mr. Gray gave the order for Jake to go free; paid the officers for their services, and returned to his hotel. For some hours his faith in spirits was strong.

The next morning, however, doubts arose in his mind. Might it not be a preconcerted plan? Might not Mrs. Rhodes have obtained by some means the information which purported to come from the other world. The appearance and conversation of that lady were all in her favor, but the keenest physiognomist and best judges of character are sometimes deceived. On the witness stand he would have believed Mrs. Rhodes implicitly, no matter how strange or how much at variance with supposed facts her testimony might be. But to believe it in broad daylight, and most of all, in the atmosphere of a court room, was a demand on his credulity he was not yet quite prepared to honor.

He determined not to confide his discovery to Miss Shaw. The subject was not a pleasant one to discuss with a young lady, involving as it did a degree of criminality on the part of her own attendant. He would wait and see what came of it.

Janet kept her appointment. Janet entered smiling and serene. Janet was dressed becomingly, almost elegantly, and looked as she felt, a lady. Janet's supple hands were nicely gloved, and Janet's round wrists were clasped by gold bracelets. Janet's conscience was at ease. It was a worldly conscience and spoke most emphatically when inspired by fear of detection. Janet's face was touched with rouge and Janet's hair fell in shining curls down Janet's back.

By license of speech we may say that Mr. Gray took the girl in at a glance. He felt inclined to smile, but restrained the inclination.

"Sit here, close by me. Our talk will be of a confidential nature."

Janet adjusted herself in a chair in her most graceful attitude. One plump hand resting on the arm would have tempted a young man of a grasping disposition to take it in soft and close imprisonment.

If Mr. Gray experienced an inclination of this nature, he suppressed it also.

"You are not angry with me for disturbing you last night, Janet?"

"O no, sir," replied the girl, letting her eyes fall to the carpet.

"I am glad you are not. I don't wish to injure you in the least. But don't you think you were a little imprudent?"

Janet's silence might fairly be construed into an ad-

mission that she was not averse to imprudence on general principles.

"I shall not lecture you, Janet. Saints don't flourish in these days. In fact, there is little encouragement to be good. Having settled with the past, let us talk of the future."

Janet made no answer, but her face indicated that she was listening.

"If you allow me to advise you," Mr. Gray continued, "you will return home and inform Mrs. Shaw that some private business which you need not mention requires so much of your time that you could not well perform the duties of your present position. Mrs. Shaw will regret to part with you, but you will be firm. A week's notice will be sufficient."

Janet gracefully inclined her head in assent.

"During that week you will abstain from interviews of a tender nature with your friend. Can you promise that?" Janet promised.

"You will have a week in which to make arrangements for the future. You think that sufficient?"

"But where shall I go when the week is up," asked Janet.

"I would not presume to advise you in regard to your future movements. If you wish to continue in service, Mrs. Shaw will speak of you precisely as if nothing had happened. In fact, as far as Mrs. Shaw is concerned, nothing has happened."

Janet rose, pale, furious, but calm. The interview did not terminate as she had anticipated. The idea was slowly dawning upon her mind that Mr. Gray had been amusing himself at her expense.

"You are very, very kind," she said, with a tinge of sarcasm in her voice and a little temper in her eye.

"Pray don't speak of it. I have only done for you what we all on occasion need to do for each other."

If Janet had been a bright girl she would have withdrawn without more words. But she was not bright and was not used to men of Mr. Gray's caliber. So she hesitated, drawing figures with her parasol on the carpet.

"Is this all you have to say to me?" she asked at last.

"I believe so. I expected you would reproach me for saying too much."

"You drive me out of my home and do not offer me another. What am I to do?"

"I regret to say, Janet, that this question occurs to you rather late. I will also venture the remark that if you were speaking to Mrs. Shaw, instead of to me, you would not expect her to provide you with a home even for a week."

Janet rose. The young man had not touched the tip of her finger. He had not spoken tenderly in the least. It was now evident that he did not care what became of her. It was the way with these men. They had no heart.

Janet returned very despondent.

"Well," thought Mr. Gray, "if I have made a friend of Jake, I have made an enemy of Lady Janet. But the girl is simply a fool."

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### THREATS OF GHOSTS AND WOMEN.

Three weeks had passed since the disappearance of Miss. The search had proved fruitless. The only intelligence received of her was that written in magnetic characters on Mrs. Rhodes's table. This intelligence was corroborated to an extent by the fact that the bark "Sea-Nymph" had cleared for New York the day after the evening on which Miss was spirited away. This, however, was only a partial corroboration, as in case the evidence was manufactured, the parties would naturally provide against positive refutation.

Mr. Gray missed his little friend and pupil sadly. He did not realize how dear she had become until he had lost her. If he could have known that she was in any designated spot in any part of the globe, he would have gone to her at whatever sacrifice.

But the fact of her disappearance was yet to assume a deeper shade of mystery. The morning papers had one of their periodical horrors. The body of a young girl had been found in the bay in an advanced state of decomposition. The story was told in the thrilling terms usually employed by ambitious reporters who write with the consciousness that the same basis of facts is being used by a rival reporter in a rival newspaper. Divested of exaggeration, the facts were these: The second night previous, a sailor had lowered himself from a vessel lying in the harbor, and undertaken to swim ashore. He was not discovered until a third of the distance was accomplished, and then boats were sent in pursuit. The boats did not find him nor was he seen to land. The presumption was, that he sank in the waters of the bay. The next day the bottom of the bay was dragged in the vicinity, and the body of a young girl, apparently fifteen or sixteen years of age, was brought to the surface. A bar of iron was attached to the body by a cord tied round its neck. Other than this there were no wounds. The face was eaten and otherwise lacerated past recognition. It was thought the body must have been in the water ten or twelve days.

Such, with the thrilling bits of description left out, was the account Mr. Gray read one morning at breakfast. He went without loss of time to see the body. It seemed to him the body of an older girl than Miss, but the condition of the body prevented anything like an accurate judgment as to her age. If full grown she was much under size. Medical opinions afterwards agreed that it was not the body of a mature woman. She might have been from twelve to sixteen years of age. Her hair was long and black, her teeth even and white. Miss was the only girl known to be missing. Miss had long black hair and white, even teeth.

Mrs. Smith, Mr. Hopp and Mr. Gray held a friendly consultation, and it was agreed to claim the body and

give it burial. No other claimants appeared, and it was given to them.

Was this, indeed, all of Miss? Had the life commenced in sadness, continued in storm, with fitful glimpses of sunshine here and there, come to so early and so sad an end?

Mrs. Smith believed or affected to believe that the body was that of Miss. Her grief was manifested in a quiet, ladylike manner. She wept softly during the funeral prayer, and kept her face buried in her hand. Her chief until the redness about her eyes had disappeared.

Mr. Gray was at a loss what course to pursue. He had no doubt in his own mind that Mrs. Smith had caused Miss to be taken from the home he had provided for her. He had, however, no evidence that would fasten the act upon her in a court of law. Waters had disappeared, O'Neil, if there was such a person, had likewise disappeared. Jake's admission of his complicity could not be used against himself, nor could he be relied upon as a witness against his principal.

A day or two after the funeral, Mr. Gray paid a second visit to Mrs. Rhodes. Regina accompanied him, as before.

Mr. and Mrs. Rhodes received their visitors with great cordiality.

"We were expecting you," said the lady; "Mr. Shaw and Mr. Smith said you would come."

The room was darkened, and soon the electrical lights began to play on the table. At least, Mrs. Rhodes said they did, though neither Regina nor Mr. Gray could see them.

At last the lady began to read.

"How—is—my—little—princess—to-night?"

"It is papa," said Regina; "is it you, papa?"

"Yes. Do you not feel that I am near you?"

"I believe you are, but I cannot see you nor feel you."

"But I can see you. I see you every day. You are not so happy as you were."

"How can I be? Are you not away?"

"You must not mourn for me. I am better here than I could be in the body. I watch over you and desire your happiness."

"Have you seen Miss yet?"

"No. Miss is not what you call dead. She is on her way to Valparaiso."

"Have you seen her yourself?"

"I have not. I am not attracted toward her, and we cannot always go of our own will. But her father sees her every day."

"Then the young girl that was found in the bay—"

"We do not know who that young girl was, but it was not Miss."

"Is Miss's father with you to-night?"

"Yes. He will write in a moment. I want to ask you about Janet."

"Janet is going to leave us."

"I know she is. What reason did she give?"

"She is going to be married."

"What do you think, Mr. Gray?"

"I hope she may be married."

"Are you satisfied, now, that what I told you about Janet is correct?"

"Perfectly satisfied."  
"But you are not satisfied as to the source of the information?"

"I admit I am not."  
"You do not believe that I am Benben Shaw?"  
"I do not say you are not. I say, simply, that I do not know that you are."

"It is better, perhaps, that you are slow to believe. If you knew, positively, that Miss was on her way to Valparaiso, what would you do?"

"I should go there as fast as steam could carry me."

"I know you would. But it would not serve Miss in the least. She is in no danger unless pursuit is made. O'Neil will keep her out of the United States until she consents to marry him. He thinks, then, that he will be the absolute master of her property."

"But a marriage with such a man is worse than death."

"Perhaps. Many things are worse than death. But you cannot help her in the least by going in pursuit of her. Besides, you are wanted here."

"For anything in particular?"

"For many things. Regie wants you to protect her from Mr. Hopp."

"O papa! I have no claim upon Mr. Gray."

"Why do you encourage Mr. Hopp?"

"I do not encourage him."

"He calls to see you almost every day."

"He always has some excuse."

"Yes; to bring you a bouquet, or take you out to ride. I know Hopp. He will not propose again until he has you so compromised that you cannot refuse him."

"He cannot do that."

"I am not sure, Regie. It is my fault that you are not independent. I shall do all I can to protect you, but we need human agencies. Do you like Mr. Hopp?"

"I like him better than I did."

"Why do you like him better?"

"He is more considerate. He acts more as a friend."

"A change of tactics. Don't be deceived. Mr. Hopp would not make a bad husband, but I don't want you to be forced to marry him. I will now give way to Mr. Smith, who wants to speak to Mr. Gray."

The electrical lights flickered and disappeared. After a moment they again began to play, and soon resolved into the letters, as described by the medium. "John Smith," in bold round characters. The medium read:

"I am the father of Miss Smith. I want to speak to the master."

"Give me some token that I may know you are the father of Miss," said Mr. Gray.

"I never spoke to you in my life. I know you was kind to little Miss when she had no other friends. I was a miserable drunkard, but sometimes my heart bled for my unhappy child. If I had not been killed just when I was, I should have taken you to my pocket and told you to keep it for Miss. I didn't need the money. I only wanted it for her."

"Do you know who shot you?"

"The man you know as Waters. He is the man

that run off with my brother's wife."

"Are they married?"

"They are not. My brother got a divorce, but she did not marry Waters."

"Can you furnish any evidence by which I can prove that Mrs. Smith was not your wife?"

"My brother James can prove it."

"Where is your brother James?"

"In Idaho."

"Can you communicate with him?"

"He does not know that I can, but I hope to influence him to come to San Francisco."

"Perhaps it would be safer if you describe his locality, as nearly as possible, that I may send for him."

"He is not located at all. He is prospecting. Sometimes he works a week in one place, and if he finds nothing to suit, he packs up his traps and starts."

"An advertisement in an Idaho newspaper might attract his attention."

"Not likely. He isn't much of a newspaper reader. Would rather have a game of 'draw' any day."

"Can you see Miss?"

"I see her every day. She is unhappy to be separated from you, but is not despondent. She has not been ill-treated. All O'Neil wants is to make her marry him."

"What kind of man is this O'Neil?"

"He is a third-rate gambler, and one of Mrs. James Smith's many friends."

"Did you know Mrs. James Smith in life?"

"Yes."

"Can you see her now?"

"When I want to. She is very busy just now."

"What is she doing?"

"Fooling that preacher's son."

"What preacher's son?"

"She calls him her Joseph."

"Is it Joseph Fox?" asked Regie.

"Don't know. Never heard his last name. Know his father is a preacher, and that she calls him Joseph."

"Have you any advice to give me in regard to your daughter?"

"Not just now. Don't give her up. Come here a month from to-day and I will try to have news from my brother."

"Well, then, if you have nothing more to say, good-night."

"Good-night. A month from to-day."

The play of the lights ceased.

"This is really very extraordinary," said Mr. Gray.

"Extraordinary," replied Mr. Rhodes, "until you admit that John Smith and every other Smith lives after what we call death, and has the power of communicating with people on earth. Is there anything in their communicating that would be extraordinary if these facts were admitted?"

"Nothing; on the contrary, he talks very much as John Smith would be likely to talk. But this assumption that spirits may and do communicate with man is in itself extraordinary. Our history goes back four thousand years, and in that time men have never been called upon to believe that they could converse with those they regard as dead."

"Let us admit this to be true. During these four

thousand years, until within the last twenty five years men have not been asked to believe that a resident of one city could converse with a resident of another city, thousands of miles away. Yet we know now what they do."

Then ensued a discussion which had been going on in various forms and through various channels for twenty years, and which is going on yet, without any moderate promise of satisfactory conclusions. Mr. Rhodes was positive and intelligent, Mr. Gray strong in skepticism and adroit in argument. Neither convinced the other, though each gained the other's respect.

During their walk home, Mr. Gray and Regie continued the discussion. More impressionable than her companion, and less fixed in her ideas, Regie was inclined to accept the strange doctrine as being almost established. She could not account for the language and expression of the intelligence which claimed to be her father, unless it was really he. The old pet name which he had given her in childhood, but which he rarely used of late, would hardly have occurred to another. And then his solicitude in regard to herself, his knowledge of Mrs. Hopp's attentions, were confirmations to her mind, as strong as proofs of holy writ.

But Mr. Gray bewildered her with his irony and the sophistry of his arguments. He descended to ridicule the adherents of that faith, forgetting that ridicule of a follower could not demolish a theory. He showed how it would be inconvenient to have ghosts with eyes and ears prowling about our houses, paying no respect to doors secured with bars and bolts. People who lived on earth and were subject to the laws that govern our physical being, had a right to protest against any such invasion of their privacy. It might not at all times be convenient to entertain a ghost, even of respectable antecedents, and it certainly was unfair for ghosts to step in without saluting host or hostess, especially as they might go away and publish an account of their visit. He did not question the sincerity of Mr. and Mrs. Rhodes, but for the present he must regard them as innocent victims of a delusion.

"But," Regie answered, "how could any one but papa know that I had told him to bring you to dine with us?"

"I admit," replied the lawyer, "I cannot explain that. There are a good many mysteries in nature we cannot solve. Neither is it necessary to accept the solution another offers, because you cannot prove it incorrect."

Regie had great respect for Mr. Gray's intelligence. From looking down upon him as the protégé of her father, she had gradually come to look up to him as the guide and protector of herself. His success in a profession which was crowded with the best minds of the day, had served to enhance the admiration his personal qualities awakened. If he had failed with the world she might have distrusted her own favorable estimate of his abilities; but fortunately the little portion of the world that had taken the trouble to estimate him at all, had pronounced in his favor.

Satirists represent women as clinging with exag-

gerating tenacity to an opinion once formed, even when shown that it is erroneous. Satirists are generally willfully wrong in their estimate of women, and never more so than in this respect. Women are not tenacious of opinions when opinions are combatted by men in whom they believe. The average woman has an instinctive conviction that her opinion on matters of moment are not worth a straw. She does not admit this disparaging estimate of herself when in the heat of argument, but she does when the heat of argument has passed. Very often she changes her opinion in a day, with no other reason for the change than a chance word from some man in whose judgment she has implicit faith. And every woman knows such a man. He may be her father, her husband, her brother, her lover, or some dear friend, but in some relation the man exists.

To Regie, Mr. Gray was this man. She had an idea that he possessed the faculty of being always right. Her father had been this man while her father lived, and her father had always told her to believe in Mr. Gray. Mr. Gray had justified her father's estimate of her character. He was equal to every emergency in which he had been placed. She had studied him with a woman's instinctive eye, and had not yet detected the weak point in his nature. She inferred, therefore, that there was no weak point to detect. Mr. Gray now very adroitly presented such objections to the spiritualistic theory as would be most likely to produce an effect on a mind like hers, and his arguments bewildered if they did not convince. If he considered the evidence they had just received as insufficient, it was rash in her to accept it as conclusive.

In the days that followed, Mr. Hopp gradually came into prominence as a friend of the Shaw family. Mr. Hopp did not appear openly as a suitor, but as a friend as much of Mrs. Shaw as of Regie. Mrs. Shaw had not liked Mr. Hopp during her husband's life, but he appeared now as a possible resource against the influence of Mr. Gray. Since the little episode in which Miss had figured with characteristic prominence, Mrs. Shaw had conceived a distrust of Mr. Gray. This distrust was intensified by the distrust of the Rev. Mr. Fox. The latter gentleman, as the reader knows, was the man in whom Mrs. Shaw believed. In matters of opinion he had taken the place of her husband. He was her spiritual guide and counselor. He was also something of a man of the world, and was supposed to know men. Dr. Fox made no concealment of his opinion of Mr. Gray. He regarded that gentleman as a dangerous character. He was sincere in this opinion, for he got it from Mrs. Smith. That lady had hinted in her persuasive way of irregularities at Red Mountain. Mr. Gray had left that locality suddenly, and without known cause. There was a Miss Morpher with whom he had been seen on a moonlight night in affectionate converse. Miss Morpher was pretty, and a fool; Mr. Gray a young man, and sly. She hoped there was no real reason for his sudden departure, but Miss Morpher had taken it much to heart. Mr. Gray was not, perhaps, to be blamed, as Miss Morpher was very pretty, and girls were expected to look out for themselves.

These innuendoes, which at length reached Mrs. Shaw's ears, excited that excellent lady's apprehensions.

She reflected that Regina was now practically without a male protector. Bob could be relied on as an avenger of any wrong that might be done her, but as an adviser and protector he was not a success. And Bob had strangely yielded to Mr. Gray's quiet strength of will and was but putty in Mr. Gray's skillful hands. A kind of web was seemingly being wound around Regina, from which there was no sure escape but matrimony. Mr. Hopp was matrimonially inclined. Mr. Hopp was a substantial man in the enjoyment of a handsome income. Mr. Hopp loved Regina, and would renew his offer of his heart and hand on the slightest encouragement. Mr. Hopp was not, therefore, in the present situation of affairs, a person against whom a prudent mother should close her doors. Mr. Hopp had not Mr. Gray's grace of person, but his intentions were honorable and his position in society entirely satisfactory.

With singular passiveness, Regina yielded to her mother's representations and received Hopp graciously. Gradually, and perhaps intentionally, she let him come between Mr. Gray and herself. When Mr. Gray called he found Mr. Hopp in the parlor. When Mr. Gray proposed a visit to the theatre or a drive out of town, Regina regretted to remember that she was engaged to go somewhere with Mr. Hopp. Her calls at the office were few and purely on business. There was no interruption in their friendship, but simply that disruption of close ties which must follow the introduction of a third person into an intimacy of two. They felt themselves growing apart, and perhaps each awaited a movement from the other toward a closer friendship than ever. Regina could not make this movement, because she was painfully conscious that she desired Mr. Gray to make it. Mr. Gray could not make it, because—well—should Miss. be still in the land of the living, and some day return, he would rather she should not reproach him with having found another Clytie.

Mr. Gray experienced during these weeks the un-

happiest hours he had ever known. There seemed no person in the world to whom he was dearer than another. He looked back upon the quiet days of Red Mountain as a period of unalloyed happiness. He recalled every walk with Miss, every wayward manifestation of her affection, and thought he could accept the inaction and obscurity of that period of his life, could he again feel the little brown hand steal into his, and see the wistful, questioning dark eyes again reading his face. There was love in these days, dull as they seemed. No one had ever displaced him in that ardent child's affection. No worldly considerations had influenced her conduct.

Mr. Gray was not so unreasonable as even in his heart to censure Regina for her encouragement of Mr. Hopp. She was a young girl, dependent, and marriage was her destiny. She had never evinced toward him other than a sisterly regard. The little litigation which she had seemed disposed to enter into was interrupted by the death of her father and the growth of that more sincere affection that resulted from their peculiar relations. She was at liberty to marry whom she pleased and he ought to rejoice in her happiness.

But Mr. Gray had not arrived at that moral elevation from which we view others without reference to ourselves. We wished to see Regina happy, but he wanted to be the source from which happiness should come. He was willing she should be loved, but not willing that Mr. Hopp should love her.

For Mr. Hopp he experienced that antipathy a sincere man always feels for one he knows to be insincere. His professional and social relations with Mr. Hopp were friendly, but neither liked the other. Woman may serve as a harmonizing element in general society, but she rarely harmonizes her young gentleman friends. The smiles which locate heaven in the heart of one, are a source of disgust to the other. If she smiles on both—as she often does—neither is quite content. It is only when she frowns on both that they are drawn together through the human craving for sympathy.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

## MISS KITTY'S FLIRTATION.

If we have described Miss Kitty Fox's emotions on meeting Mr. Gray with tolerable accuracy, the reader will suspect her to be a victim of that dangerous disease known among poets and novelists as Love at First Sight. The young lady deceived herself in regard to the state of her affections. She thought she only wanted the excitement of a lively flirtation, while in fact she was longing for a more serious conflict in the court of Love than young ladies usually comprehend under that vague description of amorous encounter. She had arrived at an age when she was making new discoveries in regard to herself every day, and was desirous of testing the value of these discoveries as elements of happiness. The narrow limits allowed in her circle to social intercourse between the sexes did not afford the desired opportunity. But the barrier which separated her from the more promising fields in which she longed to wander was not impassable. Miss Kitty knew that many of her lady friends had tripped over it, enjoyed a gay frolic and tripped back apparently unharmed. Her ardent imagination led her over, far beyond the shadow it cast, and in their wanderings the hero who led her astray was the grave and handsome lawyer bearing the unromantic name of John Gray.

But Miss Kitty hardly knew how to arrange a second meeting. Mr. Gray was not a society man, or at least he did not attend the gatherings which Miss Kitty's associates dignified as social parties. Weeks passed and she did not even see him. One day she met him face to face on Montgomery street, and while conscious of a rising flush, she was conscious also that he had not recognized her. Her fever abated for a day or two after this meeting, but afterward returned in redoubled force. The result was a letter written in the utmost secrecy, and couched in the most transparently ambiguous language, signed by the fanciful name of "Rosebud," and addressed to "John Gray."

This letter elicited no response. Mr. Gray's affections were at that time divided between two young girls whom Kitty knew pretty well, and he had no surplus love to bestow on a stranger. The letter was laid away and forgotten.

Miss Kitty's fever suffered a second abatement, but in time renewed its forces and stormed the citadel of her heart. The security of a feigned name suggested a bolder system of tactics than she would have adopted had she been writing or speaking in her own person. The advantages of anonymous letter-writing were manifold. She could draw him out and remain concealed herself. She could offer him the incense of love without compromising her own dignity. She could lead him on, and draw back as he advanced.

And finally, should he contrive to meet his "Rosebud," he would not know who she was, since he had failed to recognize Miss Kitty Fox. So the impassioned girl wrote letter after letter, each more fervid than the last, and these letters were read carefully, laid away, and finally re-read at the time when Mr. Gray was smarting under the infliction of a double loss—the loss of Miss and the defection of Regina.

The letters when first read had excited a smile of compassion. It was easy to see that they were the productions of a foolish young girl rather than of an experienced intriguer. Their artlessness was as apparent as their folly. The glow of passion was in every line, but the writer was evidently but dimly conscious of the purport of her words, from the man-of-the-world standpoint. She did not mean one-half of what it could be shown that she trust have meant. Judging harshly, as amatory correspondence is usually judged, the writer's morals might be open to suspicion, or the writer herself placed in the category of women who, if not fallen, contemplate without dismay the possibility of falling.

Read a second time under changed conditions of mind, the letters produced a deeper impression. Probably the morals of the best of men are subject to the influence of circumstances. The temptation that we lightly put aside at one time, we readily embrace at another. Mr. Gray had read these letters once without the slightest desire to meet the writer; he read them a second time and decided to seek an interview. The foresight of the writer, in giving a name by which she might be addressed in a letter rendered the preliminary steps comparatively easy.

A few days after Miss Kitty's chaotic heart was brown into a delightful ferment. The answer she had despaired of receiving had come at last. She beheld herself addressed as "My sweet little Rosebud," and for a moment she could get no farther. But the writer proceeded to thank her for the many evidences of partiality she had evinced, spoke of the pleasure such evidences of partiality had given him, and closed with a request for a personal interview. The time and place he left to her suggestion, adding that if no more convenient method suggested itself, he would be on the Oakland boat at eleven the following Saturday. A rosebud in her left hand would enable him to designate her.

Miss Kitty got the letter out of the post-office herself Thursday afternoon. She did not dare to read it until she was home and locked in her own room. Then she tore it open, and was filled with consternation at the proposition for an interview. She had always contemplated an interview at some future time, but not that she stood face to face with it she was a little frightened. She was not quite certain what construction might be placed by Mr. Gray upon her letters. She had heard it intimated that Mr. Gray was a bad man. Not that she would like him the less for being bad, but being bad he might form the opinion that Rosebud was not very much better. But, notwithstanding all these reasons why she should not grant an interview, she had not the slightest idea of losing the offered opportunity. Even if her heart should fall her on the boat she need not display the rosebud.

Miss Kitty passed two such nights as some girls



never pass in a lifetime. The whole world of romance and love seemed opening to her view. The man he had imagined had invested with all the qualities of a hero, was to assist in the solution of the mysteries with which Nature enshrouds the entrance into real life. He was seeking her of his own will. There were scores of beautiful women who must be dying for a smile, whom he passed to seek his unknown Rosebud. And then there was the question as to her powers to please. Was she as pretty as he would expect her to be after observing her poetic and fragrant name! Could she talk to please him, and would he want to see her again! Would he address her coldly and formally or would he be wicked and want to take her in his arms and call her his rosebud.

Kitty rather expected he would be just a little wicked, and in her heart she did not know that she could blame him after reading her letters.

On Friday Miss Kitty wrote to an intimate school friend, Miss Julia James, by name, informing her that she was coming over Saturday to spend the day. Saturday morning she informed her father that Miss Julia James had invited her to spend the day with her and had his permission. Miss Julia James being an estimable young lady of the same set that Miss Kitty belonged to, Dr. Fox made no objection. Her brother could accompany her to the boat and Miss Julia would meet her at the Oakland depot.

Fully twenty minutes before eleven Miss Kitty was ensconced in her chosen corner on the Oakland boat. She had chosen her position so that she could see people as they approached, not only that she might see Mr. Gray when he came, but also another acquaintance who ought to be on board. Her veil was doubled four times over her charming face, and a shawl served as a further screen in the event of the approach of some person she did not wish to meet. Beneath the shawl, in her left hand, she held a rosebud, the innocent little token by which, if she chose, she was to make herself known to her proposed companion.

Thus intrenched against unwarranted attack, Miss Kitty sat and watched the passengers as they came on board. She recognized several acquaintances but no intimate friends. At five minutes to eleven Mr. Gray passed through the gate, smoking a cigar, his overcoat on his arm. Kitty's heart gave two or three tumultuous throbs, and the tell-tale rosebud was unconsciously drawn beneath her shawl. But after a moment she rather enjoyed the situation. It was pleasant to sit, herself unseen, and watch the movements and expression of the man who had come to make her acquaintance. She was a little disappointed at first at seeing him with a cigar in his mouth. On reflection, however, she concluded that that offense might be forgiven. If the cigar indicated a coolness and self-control, she was far from experiencing herself, that very coolness and self-control indicated a man of the world to whom clandestine meetings were no great novelty. And then she was mistress of the situation. If she did not choose to display the rosebud, Mr. Gray could never find her out. Could she be so very sure, however, that he would not find her out? These men, she had heard, had a thousand devices by which they followed a secret flirtation to its source. Some were suspected of the faculty of reading a young girl's thoughts in her eyes.

Others resorted to tricks, the repetition of expressions that their correspondence had made mutually familiar, or the chance whisper of a name, watching meanwhile the effect. And girls were generally so easily caught. Should Mr. Gray chance to come near her and by any pretense utter the word "rosebud," she knew she should faint. And then of course he would know who she was. If she did not faint, she would blush and her eyes would betray her. She wished she could smoke a horrid cigar as coolly as the hard-core gentleman who seemed to have nothing else on his mind.

Just as the boat was about to push off a handsome carriage drove on board in which were a lady and a gentleman. Miss Kitty recognized the lady as Miss Regina Shaw and the gentleman as Mr. Hopp. The latter she only knew as a gentleman who sometimes attended her church in company with Miss Shaw. Miss Shaw raised her veil as they came to a halt, glanced upward, and bowed to someone on the upper deck. Miss Kitty saw that that someone was Mr. Gray. She saw also that Regina was looking exceedingly beautiful, and that after her bow her eyes turned frequently toward Mr. Gray. Miss Kitty saw, furthermore, that Miss Shaw gave monosyllabic replies to her companion though she had been talking gaily when they first appeared. Miss Kitty, with the precipitancy characteristic of her age and sex, jumped at once at the conclusion that Miss Shaw would rather have Mr. Gray in the carriage than the gentleman who was there. Miss Kitty found courage on this supposition to bring her rosebud to view, and at a fully precise manner of disclosure which was to serve as an introduction.

At last Mr. Gray tossed his cigar over the steamer's side, and entered the ladies' cabin. Without seeming to be in search of any one in particular, his eye rested upon each face as a man's might who was likely to meet in such a place a number of acquaintances. The veiled figure in the remote corner attracted his attention, and he walked leisurely that way. Miss Kitty's courage deserted her. We might say it fled, but the act of flying implies existence. In her anxiety to escape detection she changed her rosebud from the left to the right, and buried the latter under her shawl. The gentleman meantime was approaching. The gentleman, without seeming to look particularly at Miss Kitty had, apparently, observed this movement, for he walked up to her as if she had been an old acquaintance, and held out his hand.

#### CHAPTER XXXVI.

"I hope I am not mistaken," he said, "though you have not permitted me to know by what name to address you."

"Do you know me?" asked the young girl, frightened out of her wits.

"Not so well as I hope to if you are half so charming as your letters have led me to suppose."

"My letters! What do you mean?"

"That rosebud which you persist in holding under your shawl ought to serve as an interpreter."

"But how do you see a rosebud under my shawl?"

"I suppose I must see through your shawl."

"You are a very bold man, sir," said Miss Kitty, though secretly admiring the boldness she affected to censure.

"Possibly I am mistaken. If I am, I humbly crave your pardon."

Miss Kitty sat in silence a moment, and then stole a glance at the face above her.

"If you like," he said, in a low tone, "we can meet as acquaintances, and no one will know that we have met before. If you choose to consider our little romance at an end, it is your right to do so."

"I don't quite understand," said Kitty, lacking courage either to face the adventure or embrace the opportunity to withdraw.

"I suspect," replied Mr. Gray, "now I see you, that you are a mischievous young girl who thought to amuse yourself and perhaps your companions at my expense. I submit with what grace I can command, as a man should always submit to the caprices of a woman."

He bowed, and was about to turn away, when, by a gesture, she detained him.

"Sit here," she said, gathering courage; "you may talk to me until we reach Oakland."

To do the young man justice, we must admit that he would have preferred at that moment to have brought the little affair to a harmless termination. He saw that the first impression of the character of his unknown correspondent was correct. She was simply a foolish child, ignorant of the construction that might be placed upon her conduct, and thoughtless of the serious consequences that might ensue should this clandestine meeting become known. But as she desired him to remain with her during the half hour the boat would occupy in reaching Oakland, he could not well refuse.

He took the offered seat and talked to her as he would to a young lady he had met in the ordinary way. No more allusion was made to her letters, or to the plans either might have formed for the day's entertainment.

By the time the boat reached her pier Miss Kitty's courage had revived. She retained her escort and walked with him to the cars. Miss Shaw and Mr. Hopp had passed them, and the former turned to bow to Mr. Gray. Miss Kitty's mind was made up. There could be no harm in a little flirtation with a gentleman evidently regarded with favor by so irreproachable a lady as Miss Regina Shaw. Miss Kitty's reserve melted, and she no longer sought to conceal her rosebud. She confessed to having met Mr. Gray, but refused to tell him when or where. As for her name, it didn't matter. Mr. Gray might give her a name for the day. At night they would part, perhaps never to meet again.

It was arranged that Miss Kitty should call on her

friend Miss James, that that young lady might answer truthfully any inquiries that might be made in regard to her visit; and after the call they would take a drive.

The day was lovely. The sea-breeze that swept through the dusty streets of San Francisco, just stirred the foliage of the magnificent oaks which fold the neighboring city in a fragrant embrace. The leafy avenues wore their proverbial air of repose. Around the modest cottages a wealth of flowers formed a purple coronet, and on the green turf children stretched lazily in the sun. The air was laden with that sweet and fragrant odor which dying clover exhales as it falls before the scythe. To Miss Kitty's senses the earth had never seemed so beautiful, the air so fragrant. This was her first ride. It almost seemed to her that this was the first day she had lived. Like the statue of Pygmalion, she experienced a sweet surprise in every word that was addressed to her; in every thought those words inspired. If this was life she would live; if this was love she would love. The present was too glorious to mar it with thoughts of the morrow.

Mr. Gray was not insensible to the influence of this fresh young nature. His heart was just sore enough to seek relief in the balm that was offered. The word-confessions of his companion were as nothing to the tenderness of her glances, to the delicious disclosures of her rosy blushes. For once he shut his eyes on the morrow. The rosy romance does not forever tinge the earth. The rainbow's purple tints fade to the sight, but are ever present to the memory. So with the crowning joys of life. A pleasure once experienced is nourished in the heart, and its reflection casts a certain brightness on after days.

After a drive of two hours they came upon one of the quiet resorts of pleasure-seekers which are indispensable to modern cities. The hotel was surrounded with trees and almost buried in their foliage. The grounds were handsome and secluded. The view was enchanting. The bay rolled at their feet, the city smoked in the distance, a range of hills rising in the rear. The sun was still three hours above the horizon, and the outlines of a pallid moon were defined over the eastern hills.

A luxurious dinner was served in a cosy but luxurious apartment. Creeping vines dangled from the window and mellowed the light to a dreamy softness. The pictures on the wall were evidently chosen rather from sympathy with the artist's design than regard to artistic finish. It was the story they told rather than the manner of telling, that secured a purchaser. The inevitable young man and the no less inevitable young woman were the features of each artist's effort. If we might judge from these productions, the chief purpose of life is to tear one's self away from the woman one loves, and to return after the lapse of imaginary years. The masculine arm always surrounds the feminine waist, and masculine lips are eager and bold in pursuit of reluctant kisses. The form of expression was varied, but the artist was true to the spirit of life's drama, as he understood it.

Time passed quickly, discussing the luxuries of sea and forest, with love-glances thrown in by way of dessert. As the shadows lengthened and the cosy

apartment darkened, Kitty grew silent and pensive. Her tongue had kept pace with the pulsings of her heart, until the hour approached when the day was to end. Now her stolen glances were more melting, and her smiles were tremulous and sad. The moments slipped by in a kind of delicious languor, and a period was put to the day by the entrance of a waiter with lights. Twilight might be ignored until the stubborn fact of darkness was thus announced.

Kitty arose at last.

"We must go," she said, "how short the days are!"

"Yes," answered Mr. Gray, "June days are always short, I believe."

The young girl smiled and blushed, and ended with pout.

"I believe you are glad it is night," she said.

"No, my little rosebud, such days are too rare to be wished away."

"But a man makes such days as often as he pleases. To me, one may never happen again."

"I don't think fortune is likely to overlook you in the distribution of her favors."

"At last," rejoined the young girl with a light laugh, "I am not disposed to be overlooked."

Mr. Gray approached to assist her with her shawl. The mirror before which she was standing reflected their faces, and in the mirror they looked into each other's eyes.

"I see a sermon in your smile," she said. "Do you want very much to scold me?"

"I cannot scold you for an act of imprudence which has afforded me so much pleasure."

"Have I been imprudent, do you think?"

"I little."

"I don't think so. I knew you though you do not know me."

"Well, what did you know of me?"

"I knew at least you were a gentleman."

"Thank you. But how many gentlemen would be tempted to transgress by so much youth and beauty?" Miss Kitty was very busy fixing her hat before the mirror, but she murmured, softly:

"I don't understand."

"It is now past eight. You are twelve miles from your friends, who would be very anxious if you should not return by ten."

She paused a moment in the act of adjusting her hat, looked curiously at his face as reflected in the mirror, and smiled as she replied:

"I won't be frightened, Mr. Gray. You will only be too glad to take me back to my friends."

We have represented Mr. Gray as a young man of more than average principle, but an impulse came over him which the best of men do not at all times resist. He extended his arms and drew his companion to his side. For a moment the look of a startled fawn came into her eyes. It passed as quickly as it came. She stood still, her head rank upon his shoulder, and a smile, sad and tender, parted her lips. For a time there was danger that the hour of ten might come and go unheeded. The minutes flew. Their eyes spoke in the language forbidden to the tongue. The evening breeze played softly in the shrubbery without, and mingled with the sound there came the dull roll of carriage-wheels.

It needed but an echo from the world without to restore them to their senses. The carriage had stopped at the hotel, and two men were alighting. They hurriedly entered the public room. There was a brief silence, broken at last by footsteps in the hall. A knock, sharp and imperative, sounded on the door. Mr. Gray silently wound his companion's veil round her head, then opened the door. Two men stood there, the one a stout, middle-aged man; the other tall, spare, and young. The former Mr. Gray recognized as Dr. Fox. The clergyman made a movement to pass, but the way was barred.

"Villain!" he exclaimed; "I want my daughter." "Your daughter is not here," calmly replied Mr. Gray.

The clergyman started at the sound of Mr. Gray's voice, and drew back.

"Is it you, Mr. Gray?" he said, in surprise.

"It is I. What or whom do you seek?"

"I am in search of my daughter."

"Why do you seek her here? You know, doubtless, that I have not the honor of your daughter's acquaintance."

"My daughter was seen on the road that leads to this house, and I believe she is here. Let me see for myself."

"Sir, there is a lady in this room who certainly is not your daughter. I assure you of that, but I cannot permit her to be seen by the first man who comes along."

"But I must see her. Please stand aside."

"Pardon me, sir; if your daughter was here, you would have the right to enter. As I know she is not, I shall not permit you to pass the threshold."

The steady voice and calm demeanor of the young man served to allay the clergyman's apprehension. He stepped back again and looked doubtfully at his son. The latter only glanced at Mr. Gray, keeping well in the background.

The landlord came up at this moment. The landlord did not know Dr. Fox, nor care for Dr. Fox's daughter. He cared for the reputation of his house, and was opposed to any invasion of the privacy of respectable people who paid for their accommodations. The landlord heard the two statements, and took sides with Mr. Gray. Dr. Fox was informed that he could only enter the room by permission of the gentleman who occupied it.

This statement, backed by a preponderance of physical force, induced Dr. Fox to retire. Mr. Gray returned to his companion. She was curled up on the sofa, her head enveloped in a shawl, half dead with fright.

"Is papa gone?" she asked, when Mr. Gray brought her face to view.

It was now Mr. Gray's turn to be astonished.

"Papa?" he repeated. "Who are you?"

"Don't, please. I am Kitty Fox."

"Kitty Fox! The daughter of the Rev. Dr. Fox?"

Kitty answered with her sobs. Mr. Gray turned and walked twice across the room. He had just assured Dr. Fox that the lady in the room was not Dr. Fox's daughter, and now he was assured by the lady herself that she was Dr. Fox's daughter. It would all come out. No one would believe that he did not know

the lady with whom he had dined. The girl's reputation would be ruined, and his own—what would the proud and pure Regina think of a man who led a foolish young girl to ruin.

Kitty sat on the sofa, her face buried in her hands. She was not more frightened at the appearance of her father than at the cloud that had come over the face of her companion.

The sight of her bent and trembling form awakened Mr. Gray's compassion. It was no time to chide her, nor his part to add to her troubles. He went to her and gently took her hand.

"Forgive me. I ought not to speak harshly to you. Poor, foolish child! I will save you if I can."

Kitty's arm stole round his neck. One-half the grief was lifted from her mind.

"Take me home," she murmured, "and I will never, never be so foolish again."

The clinging clasp of her arms furnished somewhat equivocal evidence of the stability of her good resolutions, but Mr. Gray thought less of testing her sincerity than of complying with her request. He addressed himself, therefore, to the not unpleasant task of soothing her agitation, having in view solely her speedy restoration to the degree of composure essential to her removal. He raised her to a sitting posture, and supported her in his arms. Her head dropped upon his shoulder, and her humid eyes timidly sought his own. Still, with a view to restore her composure and endow her with courage to face the storm that was impending over her he caressed her as he would a child, and even softly kissed the lips that through the day he had not dared to touch.

This method of restoration proved eminently successful. The girl's sobs ceased, and the color came back to her fair, round cheeks. We trust she had not forgotten that an angry father was beneath the same roof as herself, in the dawning hope that the love and honor of her companion might compensate for the loss of a father's affection. If she had such thoughts Mr. Gray did not share them. He was thinking of a plan to restore the foolish girl to her friends with such semblance of propriety as might justify warrant a suspension of judgment on her father's part. If he could reach the house of Miss Julia James before Dr. Fox, that gentleman would have no evidence that Mr. Gray had been her companion, as the information which had directed Dr. Fox in his pursuit did not identify Mr. Gray as acting in that dangerous capacity.

As soon as Kitty was sufficiently composed he ordered the carriage. Once more the jaunty hat was adjusted on her pretty head and once more the shawl folded about the graceful form. Kitty was a heroine only in the security of her chamber. Her courage resembled that of a noted personage for whose existence we are indebted to the fertile imagination of a playwright—in the presence of danger it oozed out at her finger's ends. It required all of Mr. Gray's remarkable powers of persuasion to induce her to venture out when the carriage came round.

At last, however, the transit from the room to the carriage was accomplished. A glance assured Mr. Gray that Dr. Fox and the young gentleman who had accompanied him were seated in their carriage await-

ing his departure. A race of twelve miles was before him and he had to gain at least two miles to carry out the first movement in his plan.

The first two miles were uneven and he kept his horses well under control. Dr. Fox started at almost the same moment, and regulated his pace by that of Mr. Gray. They came at last upon the brow of a low, sloping hill that descended upon the level below. A sweep of ten level miles lay between them and Oakland. Mr. Gray took his horses in hand. A word sent them off at the top of their speed. He estimated that the ten miles might be accomplished in forty minutes. The noble animals seemed to enjoy the performance. The first mile only served to relax their sinews, to give them fair play. The firm, cool hand of their driver gave them that confidence in a directing intelligence which all dumb animals like to feel. A trot of three miles left his pursuers so far in the rear that Mr. Gray no longer had doubts of his ability to restore his companion to the protection of her friends before her father could arrive upon the scene.

Circumstances unquestionably have a great deal to do with love-making. Men have been known to associate intimately for years with attractive women and never utter a word that could be construed as expressive of a sentiment tenderer than friendship. On some fatal day circumstances throw them into a peculiar relation to each other. Something happens to present one to the other in a new light. A picnic party so disjoins itself that the victims of circumstances are left together. A half compulsory ride side by side inspires one or the other with a pleasurable sensation which suggests repetition. In some such way the torch is lighted. A breath fans the flickering flame. The magnetism of a touch, the quick glance of a tender eye, a rebellious blush, feed the flame into a vigorous growth. The parties become conscious that the world without the other would be a very disagreeable abiding place.

Mr. Gray and Kitty sat side by side in silence. The night was superb. The fresh sea breeze imparted an aromatic pungency to the sun-heated air. Fields of new-mown hay extended in beauty and fragrance on either side. The moon seemed suspended from the centre of a cloudless sky, while the courtier-like stars hovered near, sitting off but not rivaling the glory of their queen. The road was solitary, and the stillness was only broken by the regular tread of the horses' feet. Yet when they stopped at the gate of Miss James's house Kitty could not console herself with the memory of a fond word. She was set down like a piece of troublesome baggage with a single "good night," and her god disappeared.

Discomfited, Mr. Gray sought Dr. Fox. The two gentlemen met in the road, and at a signal from the other the younger drew rein.

"Dr. Fox," said Mr. Gray, "can I have a word with you—alone?"

"This gentleman is my son," replied the clergyman, "if you have anything to say you can say it before him."

Mr. Gray bowed to Joseph and Joseph glared through the moonlight at Mr. Gray. The latter then spoke.

"An hour ago I made a statement to you which I then

believed to be correct. I have since discovered that it was not correct."

The two gentlemen sat in severe silence. Their attitude seemed to say, "what precious lie do you mean to amuse us with now?"

"The lady," continued Mr. Gray, his tone firmer and harder, "who did me the honor to accompany me this afternoon was Miss Kitty Fox."

The elder of the listeners made a gesture which might be of surprise or impatience. Mr. Gray continued:

"Miss Fox and I had met under circumstances which impressed my name upon her mind, while hers escaped me. I met her to-day on the boat and only recognized a lady I had seen before. She punished me for not remembering her name by giving me the first she happened to think of. The beauty of the day suggested an invitation to a drive, which invitation, after much hesitation, was accepted."

"This explanation is very improbable," replied Dr. Fox, in a tone that implied more forcible than words his disbelief. "My daughter would not drive out with a gentleman with whom she had no acquaintance."

"So far as I am concerned," returned Mr. Gray, repressing his rising anger, "it is a matter of indifference what you may believe or disbelieve. My only object in speaking to you was to correct an erroneous assertion which I believed true at the time of making it. Miss Fox accepted my invitation, knowing me well through a mutual friend and confident that she would receive from me all the respect due a lady from a gentleman. If you should wish any further explanation you know where to find me."

Mr. Gray bowed and drove off. Dr. Fox found his daughter with her friend Miss James. Kitty had been informed of Mr. Gray's line of defense and she adhered to it as the one most likely to carry her through. She stood convicted therefore of the comparative mild indiscretion of accepting an invitation to drive from a gentleman with whom she had but a slight acquaintance, and who was not approved by her father.

And Madame Rumor got hold of the affair and rounded it off in her usual salacious style. The sensation dailies got hold of it and represented a trusting maiden as being rescued rather late from the arms of the despoiler. No names were used, but "a distinguished young lawyer," and "the beautiful daughter of a prominent clergyman" sufficiently designated the principals.

When too late Dr. Fox regretted his inconsiderate action. A young admirer of Miss Kitty had seen the young lady in Oakland with a gentleman he did not know, and his jealousy prompted him to watch their movements. He saw Miss Kitty go to the house of her friend, saw her return alone, saw her lifted into a carriage by the man who had been her companion on the boat. Young Admirer took the next boat for San Francisco, hunted up Dr. Fox, and told him what he had seen. The latter with his son started in pursuit. Dr. Fox had given his daughter a good lecture, and intended to let the matter rest, when by some means unknown to him it became town-talk. The worthy clergyman did not know that a certain Mrs. Smith was in the confidence of his son or he would have been less at loss to account for the unfortunate publicity

which a matter of such slight importance to the public soon gained.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### FOLLOWS THE FORTUNES OF MISS.

Miss awoke to semi-consciousness one day under the influence of what seemed an interminable dream. Her faculties were still in that confused condition which defies the utmost effort of the will. The surroundings amid which she found herself were new and strange. She was lying in a narrow bed which seemed more like a coffin than the luxurious couch with which her latest memories were connected. The room was dark, but a slanting shaft of light entered from above and diffused itself faintly throughout the gloomy inclosure. This shaft of light had given her much trouble. Sometimes it faded into the dimmest twilight, to brighten again into something like winter sunshine. Her imagination had likened this light to an aperture in a tomb over which a chance covering would fall, shutting out the world between which and herself it was the only connection. She had closed her eyes and resigned herself to death which seemed so near only to be conscious a moment later that the darkness was colored by a glimpse from without. This changing, fitful light was all that bound her to life. A profound sense of weariness assured her that she was not yet dead, and at times she had an unpleasant suspicion that she had been entombed alive, and that the aperture through which the light came was reserved by her enemies through which to watch the slow progress or death. But her mind refused to follow a thread of thought. She knew not how she came to be thus imprisoned. She had no idea of the time that had elapsed since she had been somewhere else. In the moments when life was the strongest she had a faint remembrance of being lifted in some one's arms and of the rumbling of carriage wheels. These pictures of memory were faint and transient. They were mingled with other pictures of the past in which her drunken father and her ragged self were prominent figures. They were mingled also with the mocking face of the woman she had called her mother.

By slow degrees, as when one wakes from feverish sleep, the fact of existence became more palpable. By a steady concentration of her faculties she convinced herself that the inclosure in which she was confined was not a tomb. There was something in the wall on one side that looked like a door. There was something at her head which looked like a table. On this latter something there were dishes and glass vessels suggestive of food and medicine. A chair stood at the side of her narrow bed. Some clothes hung against the wall. The shaft of light came in through a hole in

the wall above her bed. She was sensible also of motion. The room seemed suspended in the air and swayed by the wind. A sound of moving water awoke upon her senses, not as something new but as something she had heard all the time but could not make out. Presently it occurred to her that she was in a ship and that the ship was moving in the water. Her mind gaining strength began to ask questions. Was Mr. Gray also on the ship? Was Roxina on the ship? Had the house flooded off and turned into a ship, or had she floated off and left those she loved behind?

After a time the door of her room opened, and the wrinkled face of an aged woman appeared in the aperture. The face was new to Miss, and pleased her only as it formed a link to humanity. She lay still, with half-closed eyes, and the woman entered. The woman stood over her a minute, felt her hands and feet. Then she made a sign to some one outside, and a man approached. Miss recognized the man who had met Mrs. Smith and herself at the boat on their arrival in San Francisco—the man who had called Mrs. Smith "Nellie." Some whispered conversation passed between the two, from which Miss learned that she had made an unexpected and undesired return to life. Miss pretended not to hear. Her determination to live was not shaken by the knowledge that her death would be acceptable if it came as the apparent result of natural causes.

In the next three days Miss rapidly recovered health and strength. She had been kept under the influence of powerful drugs, but not otherwise ill. Her hardy constitution, inured in childhood to physical hardship and mental distress, resisted the effects of poisons that would have proved fatal to another. She understood that she had been spirited away from her guardian, and was in the hands of Mrs. Smith's friends, but she quietly awaited a development of their immediate and ultimate purpose. She asked no questions and made no complaints. But by degrees she learned that she was a passenger on board the Sea Nymph, that the vessel would touch at Valparaiso on the way to New York, that O'Neil was supposed to be her uncle, and that he had taken passage for Valparaiso, with the proviso that if he should so decide he might retain his stateroom on the voyage from Valparaiso to New York. No effort was made to restrict her intercourse with other passengers or with the officers of the ship, nor did any one seem to know that she was brought on board against her own will.

One day Miss observed reclining on the quarter-deck a gentleman she had not before seen. He was apparently thirty-five years of age, a handsome, full-bearded face, deep, calm, powerful eyes, and tranquil yet serious countenance. Something in his listless air, in his motionless attitude, in the grave repose of his manner indicated a man living within himself, a strong nature held in check. He spoke to no one and apparently saw no one. He smoked incessantly, lighting cigar after cigar, heedless of wind or sun, or the glances that were from time to time directed toward him.

Miss was fascinated by the expression of his face, the absolute repose of his manner. It is only strong natures that acquire this masterful self-control that puts mankind at a distance. This man might be im-

agined calm amid a hurricane, treading with cool, firm step over a slumbering volcano. He might be imagined leading a forlorn hope, steadily approaching a grave dug before his own eyes, turning neither to the right or left, disdaining to utter a word when a word would avert the impending fate. In the ardent eyes of the child who hovered near him he seemed a hero. Miss recollected the time when she had been jered at, taunted as a kind of hereditary outcast, looked down upon by people who in her misery despised, and it seemed as if this man looked as she then felt. By what instinct she arrived at this conclusion she knew not, but she would have staked her life, just then not much valued, that the man was an outcast hunted from the face of the earth.

For some days Miss saw little of the stranger. Once on a magnificent tropical night she stole on deck for a breath of fresh air, and beheld him half extended on the deck, alone, silent, the moonlight bathing his splendid face and tingling with silver his rich blonde beard. The child drew away, but the picture was impressed on her mind.

As the Sea Nymph approached the equator she lost the trade winds that had carried her steadily before them. For three or four days she lay lazily in the motionless sea, the sails flapping in the heavy tropical air, the taper masts describing the arc of a circle as the ship rolled in the long swells which alone betokened the restless nature of the element on which she rested. The days were sultry and enervating, the nights warm and gorgeous. The stars looked down from their far-off throne with a brilliancy never witnessed in other zones. The illimitable heavens were mirrored in the scarcely less illimitable sea. The slow and regular roll of the waves was like the breathing of a sleeping giant. There was visible the slumbering power that might awake to terrific action.

One night Miss was awakened by a sound more appalling than the heaviest thunder clap she had ever heard. As the roar ceased to reverberate there followed the crash of heavy bodies falling upon deck, the hurried trampling of feet, the ominous whistle of the wind and the yelling of human voices. She leaped from her berth, hastily dressed herself and crawled on deck. The spectacle she beheld was indescribably grand. The sky was of that velvety blackness which realizes the terrible import of that little word, nothing. Its utter blackness shut out the idea of anything beyond. This opaque density was invaded by three lines of iridescent fire. The playful gleams of the fire threw a livid glare over the forms of men struggling with waves of something white. A minute's scrutiny sufficed to inform Miss that the lines of fire were the masts of the ship bent to an angle with the sea and seemingly enveloped in a flame that burned but did not consume. The wind whistled through the rigging like an infuriated demon, slashing, tearing, screeching, and all the time the phosphorescent fire shone on the masts and yard arms and outlined with its glow the form of the deck. To her inexperienced eyes the ship seemed sailing in a flame. Looking over the bulwark she saw through the darkness a surface of white which she supposed must be the sea. Suddenly a long dazzling flash of lightning cast a vivid illumination over the scene. The ship was careened over almost upon her beam ends and men

were cutting free broken yards and the remnants of tattered sails.

The flash, brief as it was, revealed to Miss a tall motionless figure, and a serene face which she recognized as that of her imagined outcast. He was leaning carelessly against the bulwarks, his cigar between his lips, surveying the scene as he would a moon-lit landscape. The flash that revealed him to Miss, revealed also Miss to him. The flash expired as suddenly as it came—a deafening report followed, and as the sound rolled off into space the play of the phosphorescent fire outlining the ship's form alone showed that she still floated upon the angry bosom of the sea. Miss had now become conscious that the stranger had moved nearer and laid his hand on her arm.

"Better go below," he said; "we'll have a shower shortly."

"It's too grand," she answered. "I wouldn't miss it for the world."

As she spoke the clouds seemed to open. It was not rain, it was a deluge. The phosphorescent fire still shone, and made in every stream a rainbow. The shower lasted but two minutes, but a broad stream ran down the slanting deck, and poured like a torrent into the sea.

Suddenly the black clouds broke and floated away. The wind ceased, and the stars looked down serene as ever. The white foam danced upon the waves, but it was broken into floating crests, and the story it told was of a darker past.

The stranger stood near Miss and still retained his hold upon her arm.

"The squall is over," he said, "and no great harm done. Were you afraid?"

"A little. I thought the ship was on fire."

"The fire you saw was electricity. Iron attracts it, and when the night is dark it makes a pretty sight."

"I never saw anything so grand. Will there be another squall?"

"Very likely; but hardly such another as this. We were in the midst of a thunder cloud."

"I have seen thunder clouds come down on the mountains, but I never was at sea before."

"Then you have lived in the mountains?"

"Always, until within a few months."

"May I ask in what locality?"

"In Red Mountain; the settlement is known as Smith's Pocket."

"Indeed! I was there once some years ago. I knew Smith pretty well."

Miss returned no reply. She had ceased to feel shame for her dissolute father, but experience had taught her the danger of too free communication with strangers.

Her companion continued

"Smith was a better man than people who knew him later gave him the credit of being."

"When did you know him?"

"In early days; about '50, I think."

"Did you see him when you visited Red Mountain?"

"Yes; but the poor fellow had gone to the dogs. People helped him along; people always do."

"Not all people," said Miss.

"You are right; not all people. But you are drench-

ed. You'll catch cold, even in this climate, if you don't take care of yourself."

"Good-night, then, I'll go below."

"Good-night."

The stranger turned away, and Miss, as she descended to the cabin, looked back and saw him standing in his old place by the bulwark, lighting his cigar.

There were no more squalls that night. By degrees the ship drifted into the latitude in which the southern trade winds prevailed, and proceeded on her voyage. The stranger and Miss became good friends. In time they became confidential. The novelty of the position in which Miss was placed awakened an interest he might not otherwise have felt.

Meantime O'Neil was engaging himself in a way peculiar to himself. O'Neil was well supplied with money. He found two or three fellow passengers who were not so rich as to be unwilling to add to their possessions. A friendly game of poker had been proposed early on the voyage, and the proposition had been accepted. The game continued with such interruptions as the laws of nature imposed during the entire voyage. Chance so arranged affairs that what one won to-day he lost to-morrow. All the players were experts, and all cheats of the worst description. They quarreled frequently, but their quarrels ended in more play. O'Neil apparently forgot the very existence of Miss. Content with the knowledge that she could not escape, he let her amuse herself as opportunity or inclination prompted.

In due time the Sea Nymph entered the harbor of Valparaiso. Poker players settled accounts and arranged for a continuation of the game ashore. Miss bade her new friend good-bye. O'Neil came and took her under his protection. They entered a boat and were rowed ashore. O'Neil took his charge to an obscure hotel, and arranged for her board. For three days he did not come near her. The fourth he came. He had been drinking, and was in a bad humor. The goddess who presides over the faro tables at Valparaiso had been less friendly than the divinity of his favorite game of "draw." He had lost his ready cash, and a letter of credit which he possessed would only be honored when certain formalities had been observed, in accordance with instructions the bank had received by letter. These instructions were to the effect that the letter of credit which O'Neil might present, was only to be honored when O'Neil produced evidence of his marriage with Miss.

O'Neil was anxious to produce such evidence without delay. He did not like Miss, but he anticipated with some satisfaction the opportunity marriage would afford to avenge upon the now helpless girl some slights she had put upon him on her arrival in the city. He had made friendly advances at that time which she had repulsed. Her mother had offered him an opportunity to be revenged, and he had accepted it.

O'Neil entered the young girl's room inflamed with drink, mad from loss at play, yet elated with a consciousness of power. She was a stranger in a city the language of which was unknown to her. She had no means of livelihood nor knowledge of labor by which means of livelihood could be obtained. In a word, she was helpless, and he her master.

Miss understood that the man had some purpose in

separating her from her friends. Precisely what that purpose was she could not divine. That it was a part of a scheme of Mrs. Smith to obtain possession of the fortune for which she had striven so long, Miss had no doubt. That the possibility of her death had been anticipated with satisfaction she was well aware, but in the event of her surviving she had no means of knowing what measure it was proposed to take.

The hotel in which she lived was one little frequented by Americans. It was a two-story building, broad and low, with thick walls and prison-like windows. A row of orange trees grew so close to the house that their golden fruit hung in clusters before her window. On the turf without dark featured men were lounging, smoking their cigarettes, telling stories, and occasionally singing in the sweet and sonorous language of Spain.

The isolation of Miss seemed complete. For four days she had not heard a word she could understand, or spoken a word understood by those she addressed. And now came to her the only man on whom she had a claim for protection with a threat on his brow, and passion in his eyes.

Miss received him coldly, or rather she did not receive him at all. He had a certain right to come where she was, and this right she did not dispute. She met his eye without fear, and silently waited for him to speak.

"You're a cool one, you little hell-cat. Do you know what I brought you to this cursed town for?"

"No," she answered.

"It's time you did. How old are you?"

"Thirteen."

"Thirteen? Rather young to be married, eh?"

"I am not going to be married!"

"I'll bet you are. That's what I brought you here for."

The black eyes of the young girl emitted a sudden flash, and her red lips tightened over her white teeth.

"You needn't make a fuss," continued O'Neil; "you can't help yourself if you want to. Your mother put me up to it, and she's so fixed things that we can't enter of us touch a dollar of your money until the ceremony is performed."

"Then you'll never touch a dollar of my money, O'Neil, never. And I tell you now if you put your hand on me I'll kill you."

The concentrated purpose of these low-spoken words sobered the wretch. He drew back instantly. She was a girl, small, fragile, but her spirit was indomitable, and her muscles like steel. A lighter and weaker hand than hers might drive a dagger to a strong man's heart.

"Come, Miss," he said, coaxingly, "listen to reason. We are five thousand miles from anywhere. I haven't got a dollar, neither have you. What are we going to do?"

The change of tone only provoked a contemptuous smile. She made no reply.

O'Neil took from his pocketbook a letter of credit for two thousand dollars, and laid it before Miss.

"If you sign this as my wife," he said, "we can draw the money and go where we please. We can travel for pleasure. We can go to New York,

and some of these days we can go back to San Francisco."

The young girl was not tempted. She did not deign even to look at the paper. Her pale, dark face showed no signs of relenting.

"What do you say, Miss? I won't be a hard husband. I'll promise not to bother you with my company when you don't want it. I'll let you have your own way in everything. You shall have fine dresses and jewelry, and everything you want."

The man had fallen into a wooing tone that only intensified the contempt Miss had felt for him. If, in the recesses of her brave little heart she had experienced a fear of him, she feared him no longer.

"What do you say?" he repeated.

"I say no," she answered quietly.

Her firmness revived his passion. He approached nearer, his small eyes glittering, his face purple and pale in spots, and said in a hoarse tone of voice:

"Look here, you young fool. It's fixed between your mother and me that I am to marry you. But it was understood that if you should die on the voyage, or die after you arrived here, that I am to have a share of the money. Now," he continued, extending his hand, "if I should take your throat between my thumb and forefinger, and pressed it with half my strength, in five minutes you'd be in—"

Miss had arisen at his approach, and slowly retreated toward the window. Still facing him, and ready to spring to avoid his touch, she leaned against the window sill, and with one hand behind her waved her handkerchief.

"Don't touch me," said Miss, "don't kill me. I'll give you money. I'll—"

"Will you marry me?" demanded O'Neil.

The young girl hesitated. O'Neil repeated the question. He advanced again in a threatening attitude, and Miss sprang aside. At the same moment sound of hurried footsteps was heard in the passage, and the door thrown open without ceremony revealed the athletic figure and calm pale face of the stranger of the Sea Nymph.

O'Neil stood for a moment dumb with astonishment.

"Colonel Wade, he gasped, at length; "I thought you was—dead."

"The report was incorrect," coolly replied the individual addressed. "I am alive, and in my usual robust health."

Colonel Wade bowed to Miss as she had finished speaking, and advanced into the room.

"Let us understand each other O'Neil," he said, in a calm, courteous tone. "I was a passenger on the Sea Nymph, though for reasons of my own I did not mingle much with my fellow passengers. Chance led me to form the acquaintance of this young lady, and I learned from her something of her history. Anticipating the time might come when she would need a protector, I offered myself as such and was accepted. Since we arrived in this city I have not lost sight of her. The time we looked forward to seems to have arrived. She is at liberty to choose between us. If she chooses you, I pledge you my word not to interfere with your design; if she chooses me, you will be so kind as to adopt the same line of conduct."

"This is not fair, Colonel," protested O'Neil; "the girl belongs to me."



"Is she your daughter?"

"No."

"Your niece?"

"No."

"Your wife?"

"No."

"Then, so far as you are concerned, she belongs to the man to whom she chooses to give herself. You, apparently, are not that man. You thrust yourself upon her, and I offer her my protection. If you feel aggrieved, you can seek redress. There is one thing in favor of this country—gentlemen can settle their little difficulties in an expeditious manner. But let us not quarrel in advance. The young lady may choose to remain with you when she learns who I am."

"Shall I tell her who you are?"

"I should rather you should tell her than tell her myself. She has not yet arrived at an age when men think themselves justified in deceiving women. Tell her who I am."

"Miss, this man who comes between you and me, is under sentence of death."

"Pardon me," coolly interrupted the other; "in California I was under sentence of death. I escaped. In Valparaiso I am not."

"What did he do?" asked Miss, addressing O'Neil.

"Killed a man."

"What for?"

"He accused him of cheating at cards."

"State the case fairly, O'Neil. There was a quarrel. The man I shot drew his pistol, and I drew mine. His ball grazed my temple, mine entered his. It was a question of exertion in aim. The real trouble was, I am a gambler by profession, my antagonist a more or less honest miner. He would have won my money if he could, just as you, O'Neil, have tried to win it. He lost his money, and losing his money, he lost his temper. I was tried for killing him—tried by a mob—convicted of murder, but the night before I was to have been hanged I made my escape. It cost me all I had, but I am here."

"What do you want with the girl?"

"I hardly know. I believe I am actuated by the desire to experience the sensation that arises from the performance of a virtuous action. The child has had a hard life. Men and women have conspired to degrade her, to render her life unhappy. Her helplessness appeals to me. Her courage inspires a certain admiration. If she was a man I would let her fight her own battles—as she is a child, I propose, with her consent, to fight them for her. What do you say, Miss? Will you go with me, or remain with him?"

"I will go with you."

"Are you willing to trust yourself with such a man as I?"

"I am willing to trust myself with you."

The colossal bent his handsome head and touched the child's brow with his lips.

"Understand, O'Neil, if you cross the path of this child hereafter, you cross mine."

O'Neil inclined his head in submission. Colonel Wade and Miss passed out, hand in hand.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### RED MOUNTAIN.

The Wingdam stage had recovered its reputation for sobriety. Since the eventful day when it carried our heroine from her mountain home, it had indulged in no other antics than the conventional gallop from the foot of the mountain to the door of the National Hotel. This harmless frolic was in deference to time-honored custom. The Wingdam stage had always arrived in a burst of speed. Its intelligent horses knew what was expected of them. The crack on the driver's whip was like a ceremonial summons to refreshment. It was responded to with an alacrity and a sincerity of action which imposed upon the youth of the settlement. The animated young faces that welcomed its imposing approach would have been shadowed with a serious disappointment had the caprice of its driver asserted its supremacy over established habit.

Since the day when we last followed its tortuous way up the mountain, the Wingdam stage had carried some illustrious passengers. It had carried Judge Plunkett on his way to Sacramento, when he was summoned to enlighten the Supreme Court on some knotty question of mining law; it had carried Dr. Duchesne, when a convocation of regularly educated physicians furnished him with a valid excuse for leaving his patients to participate once more in the gayeties of city life; it had carried a score or more of painted women whose self-imposed mission it was to bewilder the modest dames of Smith's Pocket with a glimpse of the latest San Francisco fashions; it had carried a live member of Congress, who came with two less famous statesmen who aspired to seats in our own Legislature, to instruct the males of Smith's Pocket as to their political duties; it had carried three well-known San Francisco capitalists, who contemplated substantial investments in the auriferous bowels of Red Mountain; and last, but not least, it had carried that promising specimen of Young California, known to the readers of this veritable history as Robert Shaw.

Despite these professional triumphs, Bill Green bore himself with characteristic modesty. He conversed familiarly with the residents of Smith's Pocket, at times when no more important duties required his attention. He sometimes, though rarely, gossiped about the distinguished people he conducted into the settlement, and speculated upon the effect their coming would have upon its general prosperity. He brought bundles for ladies who desired in their attire to preserve harmonious relations with the greater world that throbbed on the other side of the mountain, and nodded pleasantly to school-girls who made it a point to intercept the stage before its arrival at the hotel, when it was given over to masculine inspection. He permitted boys to climb with impunity upon the rack, where the baggage of his passengers was

placed, and if he sometimes flourished his avenging whip over their heads, he rarely let it fall about their naked limbs. In return for these varied kindnesses, Bill Green was everywhere treated with marked respect.

Something more than a year has passed since the master bade farewell to the settlement of Smith's Pocket. His memory is still cherished, for stories had come up of his wonderful success in the city, and strangers are shown the school-house where he was once an humble and patient laborer. The school-house has now a larger flock of attendant, but its outward aspect is the same. The master's successor is less a favorite than the master himself, and is wanting somewhat in the old master's faculty of making school popular with the young lady members of the first families. He is diligent, faithful, and patient, but he is neither young nor handsome.

In its material interests the settlement is flourishing. A fine quartz mill is in successful operation near the site of Smith's Pocket, and the mountain is honey-combed with shafts and tunnels. Some of the prospectors are successful; others live in hopes of forcing the capricious goddess who reigns in the mountain to recognize their existence. The settlement has kept pace with the development of mineral wealth. An Episcopal Church now rears its imposing front almost in the face of the less pretentious pioneer of the Methodist faith. The first families avail themselves of this opportunity to assert more decisively their aristocratic proclivities by attending the new church. A billiard-saloon, within a little more than a stone's throw, unobtrusively contrasts its turbulent and profane frequenters with the placid respectability of the Sunday congregation. The Sabbath is kept after a fashion not peculiar to the settlement. The miners rest from their labors, but, I regret to say, add materially to the labors of saloon-keepers. Some of them submit to an hour's restraint in the morning for the sake of a glimpse of the pretty feminine faces that lend attractiveness to religious service, but a larger number are content to stare at the pretty faces as they pass to and fro on their way to and from the church.

The advent of Robert Shaw at the settlement attracted some attention. The son of a late distinguished member of the San Francisco bar was a presumptive capitalist. It was soon known, also, that he was Mr. Gray's friend and agent, and that he knew the little mountain girl whom all the old residents remembered with paternal tenderness. Easy of approach, frank and communicative, he soon established his claims to consideration on personal grounds. He tramped over the hills and descended into shafts with as much ease and nerve as if he had been a miner all his life. He had other accomplishments which might not be appreciated in elegant social circles, but were of service to a city visitor in a mining settlement. Evenings in the saloon, he sang all the minstrel songs of the day and danced to banjo accompaniment. He introduced "Love Among the Roses" and the "Big Sunflower" with decided success. At billiards he beat the sporting men whom miners always like to see beaten, and in sporting carance "got away" with large sums of their coin. But Napoleon invaded Russia, and Bob was not greater than Napoleon. One quiet Sunday afternoon he allowed himself to be bantered

into a game of "draw-poker." The mistake was fatal. Bob lost steadily, so steadily, in fact, that he strongly suspected his opponent of cheating. He watched him narrowly until a movement gave certainty. Then Bob, with characteristic warmth, made the charge openly. A denial was accompanied with an insulting epithet. Bob replied with a blow that knocked his opponent down.

The crowd rushed in and separated the combatants. Bob was now informed that he had been playing with the "best man" in the settlement. This "best man" was known as "Butcher Bill." He was a terrible fighter and had never been whipped. He was a bully, but his personal strength and skill in the use of Nature's weapons rendered him an object of dread even among fighting men.

The saloon filled with a turbulent crowd. The miners rolled around Bob. He was a stranger and a gentleman, the other a professional gambler and a notorious bully. Bob had sat down to a gentlemanly game of poker, and the bully had resorted to his professional tricks. If need be they would hang the gambler, but Bob, their guest, should not be touched.

Bob cut short their expostulations by the announcement that all he asked was a fair show. If they would take care of Butcher Bill's friends, he would take care of Butcher Bill. He was cool and smiling. As he took off his coat he displayed a figure that went far to reassure his friends. He was a picture of a trained athlete. A broad, deep chest, heavy shoulders, long arms, the muscles of which were hard as steel, showed a physical force superior to that of his adversary. But the latter was a veteran fighter, with the confidence derived from a hundred victories. He had the carriage, endurance of a professional prize-fighter.

When two men really want to fight they are seldom prevented. Friends only serve to cover a retreat, when one party prefers that line of action. We have not represented Bob as a model young man, but we desire to give him credit for his good qualities. He certainly had physical courage. On this occasion he made his friends understand that he was in earnest, and they yielded.

The crowd adjourned to the open air. It was a warm Sabbath afternoon, and two churches stood rebukingly in the distance. Women who had been strolling through the street, sought the shelter of some friendly house when the crowd appeared. Pale and anxious faces looked wonderingly from the windows, but these were unheeded. A circle of stakes was driven into the ground, a rope stretched around them forming a ring, and the crowd barred out. It was agreed that the combatants should fight as they pleased, until one should cry "enough," or until one should be incapable of continuing the battle.

I shall not afflict my readers with details. I would gladly pass the event by, if consequences had not followed which require to be accounted for. Even my lady readers, who have doubtless a horror of Bob's character, will be glad to know that he conducted himself under these trying circumstances like a lad of spirit.

Butcher Bill was inclined, at first to make short work of his youthful antagonist. The latter, however, parried the butcher boy's blows without any extraor-



dimery display of science. But it was observed that the butcher's favorite "left-handers" were stopped on the way to Bob's visage. It was observed, also, that Bob seemed more intent upon studying his antagonist's style than in exhibitions of his own. The gamblers affected to sneer at Bob's tactics, but the miners cheered every neat garry, and encouraged Bob with more or less sage advice. But when, at the close of a sharp spurt on the part of Bill, Bob followed him up and succeeded in breaking his guard, there was a wild shout of exultation. And when Bob planted two stinging blows in quick succession on Bill's right eye, nearly lifting him off his feet, there was such a yell as had not been heard in Smith's Pocket within the memory of the oldest inhabitant. But Bill was accustomed to this kind of treatment. He recovered himself quickly and continued the contest with more deliberation but with scarcely less spirit. Occasionally he gained a slight advantage, but the tide of affairs was, on the whole, against him. It soon became a question of endurance. The one who could stand the most punishment and not lose his head was pretty sure to be the winner. Bill's friends stood in a corner together, their pistols cocked in their pockets, ready for emergencies. The miners were more noisy in their demonstrations, but not a few of them were prepared to defend their champion against any mode of attack that might be adopted.

It soon became evident that the end was approaching. Bob was equal in science, in courage, and endurance to his antagonist, and was superior in physical force. The advantage of this element in a personal encounter became more telling as the combatants became more nearly exhausted. At last the redoubtable Butcher Bill only rose to fall beneath the terrible blows of his determined antagonist. He kept up a show of fight after every hope of success was knocked out of him, but in the end his friends admitted him vanquished, and carried him from the field.

The victor was badly bruised. His elegant sister would hardly have recognized him, as he was led, nearly blind and covered with blood, from the scene of his triumph. Mr. Gray would hardly have congratulated himself on his choice of an agent had he seen that agent after this Sunday afternoon's performance. But Mr. Gray's old friend, Dr. Duchesne, exercised the privilege of friendship, took the young pugilist in charge, separated him from those who would have celebrated his victory by orgies scarcely less revolting, and finally looked him in a private room in the National Hotel.

The next day Bob showed symptoms of fever. The second day the symptoms were more decided. Dr. Duchesne administered the usual remedies, but the fever refused to be dislodged. Then followed three weeks of delirium. One day the young man awoke to consciousness, helpless as an infant, but with a full recollection of the events that had preceded his illness.

Almost the first object that met his eye was a boy sitting on a chair near the bed. The boy hopped down the moment he saw that the patient was awake. As the boy alighted on the floor, Bob had a view of a large body set upon a pair of short legs. The countenance that presented itself above the large body was intelligent and prepossessing. It beamed at that moment

with an expression of mingled pleasure and admiration.

"Who are you?" asked Bob.

"I'm Aristides."

"Ah!" said Bob, a little confused, "I've heard something about an Aristides."

The classical youth's countenance expressed more decided satisfaction at this intelligence. I am afraid he thought it an honor to be remembered by a man who had whipped Butcher Bill in a fair stand-up fight. "I'm to tell Dr. Duchesne when you wake up," said Aristides, and he was off.

Bob had a little time for reflection. He had already made the discovery that he had less strength than the small boy who had just left him, and he hardly knew how to account for the fact. He could not remember when his limbs had refused to obey the dictates of his will. The sense of helplessness was a kind of surprise. It was a condition of the physical system he had never contemplated as possible to him. It seemed as if somebody had somehow taken an unfair advantage of him. He remembered having been engaged in a battle, compared to which his previous encounters were but boys' play, and of being borne off a victor. He supposed he must be the same fellow, but could hardly understand where the part of him which enabled him to sustain such a contest had gone.

Aristides hopped lightly into the room. Dr. Duchesne followed. The boy pointed to the bed, his face aglow with enthusiasm. He seemed impressed with the idea that he had in some substantial manner contributed to the patient's recovery.

"How do you find yourself?" asked the doctor, placing his finger on his patient's pulse.

"D—d weak," replied Bob.

"Well, we'll have you up shortly."

"What's the matter, any way?"

"Nothing but a little fever. It's Nature's way of punishing an abuse of her forces."

"Well," said Bob, "if it's all the same to Nature, I hope she'll call it even. I've got enough."

"Nature will let you off this time, but I wouldn't tempt her too often."

"How long have I been down?"

"About three weeks."

"That's a long time for a fellow not to know what's going on."

"Yes, when a fellow isn't used to that sort of thing, he's quiet now."

"All right. You're a good fellow, doctor."

"Here's another good fellow," said the doctor, taking Aristides by the hand. This is Aristides Morpher, a former pupil of your friend, Mr. Gray. He's been your nurse."

"Ah," said Bob, "you're the little fellow that used to stand by Miss. Do you remember Miss?"

"But I do," replied Aristides, with an emphatic nod of his head.

"Good. Miss remembers you. Miss isn't a girl to go back on her friends. Some of these days we'll go down to Trisco and see her."

Ris's round eyes almost started from their sockets at this prospect. With the precipitancy characteristic of his tender age, he started off to inform his parents of his proposed visit to the city. The just Aristides was not the only member of the Morpher family who

were what Bob would call "good fellows." The fact that Bob was a friend of Mr. Gray had served as a passport to Mrs. Morpher's favor. In the week that followed, many delicacies found their way from her abundant table to the room of the prostrate Hercules; and when the prostrate Hercules was again on his feet, his first visit was to the Mountain Ranch.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### CLYTIE.

A year had added to the beauty of Miss Clytie. She was more decidedly than ever the belle of the settlement. She had had several offers of marriage and had refused them all. In deportment she was no less correct than in the days when she had been held up as a model for Miss, to the extreme displeasure of that native lady. Her beauty was still suggestive of strawberries and cream, but that type was in favor with the young gentlemen who composed the rugged element of the society of Smith's Pocket. An impression prevailed to some extent that Mr. Gray might have attained the felicity of an alliance with the village beauty, if he had availed himself of the favorable moment, but there were those who did not believe that the young man lived who could be indifferent to her charms. Miss Clytie was reticent on the subject. She was far too correct to plead an unrequited love as an excuse for the numerous disappointments she was compelled to inflict. When reproached for the hardness of heart which rendered her impervious either to siege or assault, she only cast upon the supplicant a soft and melancholy regard which added fuel to the flame she would not quench. It was characteristic of this exemplary young lady that she parted friends with those who came as admirers. Her manner seemed to say that it was not their fault if they loved her nor her fault if she could not love them. She was sure she was very sorry if she had ever seemed to try to win a love that she could not requite, and they must not think she had. Then she would bestow upon him a melting glance of her tender blue eyes and mutely ask to be forgiven. Then the disappointed swain would fall upon his knees and swear that she was an angel, and that he was a presumptuous fool to think of winning her. Then Clytie would give him her soft white hand; her soft white hand would rest caressingly in a hard palm, and after a moment of ecstasy the strong man would tear himself away. Certainly if Clytie still remembered the night when she had had awake thinking of a flitzy-hearted schoolmaster, she was reverged on his perdition forever.

One afternoon, an hour before sunset, Clytie was in the garden among the vines and flowers herself the fairest flower of them all. The pink of her cheek

rivalled the softest blush of the cinnamon rose, and the blonde curls that fell over her shapely shoulders were touched with a richer gold than the brightest shades of the yellow lily. Her petite round figure was clad in blue gingham, and decorated with bows of pink ribbon. Dress with this lovely child of nature was not an art, but an observant eye had taught her to select shades in harmony with her delicate complexion, and a consciousness that masculine eyes followed her when she was out of doors inspired a steady devotion to her toilet that prepared for her admirers surprise after surprise. The charm of all was her apparent unconsciousness of producing effect.

This afternoon, in particular, Clytie had neglected to be attentive to toilet that she usually observed. For the just Aristides had confided to her a great secret. The young hero, who for three weeks had laid at the hotel, at the point of death, was coming to thank in person the esteemed heads of the Morpher family for the kindness shown him while dependent on the good offices of strangers. Miss Clytie very much disapproved of this young man, as a character, but her good sense informed her that she need not be discourteous to him as an individual. From all accounts, he was a wild and reckless young man. But he came from the distant city which she hoped some day to visit, and he was a friend of the man who had caused her more sleepless hours than she cared to confess.

Fully conscious that her absent brother was approaching the gate, accompanied by the expected visitor, Clytie continued to practice her graceful attitudes among the vines and flowers. The gate opened and closed, and footsteps were heard on the little piece of graveled walk that stretched from the door to the gate. The sonorous voice of the self-appointed master of ceremonies forbade longer indulgence in an appearance of unconsciousness. Miss Clytie turned, with the graceful quiet which characterized all her movements, and found herself face to face with the just Aristides and his companion.

"Cly," exclaimed the young hopeful, advancing a little, and speaking in a suppressed tone, but still loud enough to be heard a mile off, "this is him. This is the man that whipped Butcher Bill."

The reader will perhaps have perceived that the moral and social ideas of the youthful Aristides were as yet unformed. Notwithstanding the promising circumstances of name, there was enough of the hoodlum in his nature to so far warp the presumed rectitude of his mind that he gloried undisguisedly in the pugilistic triumphs of his new friend, and he thought his introduction of a character to insure the admiration of any human being not dead to all the finer sentiments that animate mankind.

Miss Clytie cast a mildly reproving glance upon the tripping Aristides and then bowed gracefully and decorously to the young gentleman. The young gentleman bowed in return, but instead of sliding off as most boys she knew would have done, he came close up to her and held out his hand.

"So," he said, with shocking audacity, "you are the pretty Clytie I've heard so much about. Give us your hand. Know we shall be good friends."

The correct Clytie was a little shocked when she found her delicate white hand in a stranger's clasp

but she saw at the moment no way to extricate it. He held it gently, yet persistently, while he surveyed her blushing face with a gaze of undisguised admiration.

"If I could call you Miss Morpher," continued Bob, "as I suppose I ought, I shouldn't know who I'm speaking to. It would break the charm. Mr. Gray always speaks of you as Clytie, Miss always speaks of you as Clytie, and even my sister, who is the most proper girl you ever heard of, speaks of you as Clytie."

"But Mr. Gray is a very old friend of the family," remonstrated Clytie, "and Miss and I were children together."

"There is something in that," assented Bob, as if he had just thought of it, "but then I'm a very old friend of Mr. Gray's."

Aristides meantime was looking on in open-eyed admiration.

The observant youth had seen the young men of Smith's Pocket stammer and blush when brought in contact with his pretty sister, and the elan of Bob's attack appealed to his daring mind as some big altogether heroic and worthy of imitation. He inwardly resolved that the next time he met Susie Storms, a young lady, of mine of whom he was secretly enamored, he would talk to her just as Bob talked to Clytie.

Then came other claimants to Bob's attention. Mrs. Morpher appeared and gave her guest a wordy welcome, mingled with inquiries after his health and how he liked the village. In a little time the younger members of the Morpher family insinuated themselves into the room, and being of a kinsable age were seized upon by the irrepressible Bob. The closest friendship was immediately established between the visitor and Octavia, who was a precocious child of about nine years, a friendship to which Cassandra, a year or more younger, was finally admitted.

This visit was followed by others. Bob was still a patient of Dr. Duchesne, and as such was forbidden to make excursions into the mines or to mingle with his acquaintances in the saloon. His time, therefore, was on his hands, and the Mountain Ranch was close by. Mrs. Morpher always welcomed him warmly and sent Clytie to entertain him while she attended to household duties. Octavia and Cassandra went to school. Aristides and Lyeurgus being boys, were rarely in the house.

The correct Clytie soon forgot to raise her eyes reproachfully when she heard her abhorred name spoken by her new acquaintance. His plea that he was an old friend of an old friend of hers, was accepted after very little consideration. His way of talking what he wanted rather imposed upon her yielding and gentle disposition. Her air of natural reserve melted inconstantly when she found it utterly inefficient to keep him at a respectful distance, as other admirers had been kept. Of what use to struggle to withdraw her hand when a struggle invariably ended in the imprisonment of her wrist, or hesitate to give him a cool-night kiss when she knew by sad experience that he would persist until the kiss was given.

Bob recovered his health and strength, but he regained the position of pugilistic champion. Butcher Bill left the settlement in chagrin without seeking to regain his lost laurels, and no one appeared to question a supremacy which that little warrior declined to challenge. Nothing occurred therefore to interrupt the relations which Bob had established with the Morpher family.

## CHAPTER XL.

## MOONLESS NIGHTS.

When such intimate relations spring up between a young man of twenty and a maiden of sixteen, older people are apt to ask what it means. It seems an established fact that such relations cannot continue through life. In good society there are two lawful terminations—marriage or separation. If the young man is honorable and in a condition to marry, he will withdraw his attentions at a certain stage in the intimacy, when only a few sighs and perhaps a few sleepless nights will result in consequence.

I regret to say that Bob did not exhibit the high sense of rectitude which marked Mr. Gray's conduct under similar circumstances. The future was an unknown element which did not enter into his (Bob's) calculations. Clytie was a beautiful and innocent girl—sweet, tender, and affectionate—and he loved her as he had loved scores before. He had no dishonorable intentions; of that he was the more certain since he had no intentions at all. He thought only of the present moment. It became a habit to seek Clytie every evening, to walk with Clytie every afternoon, to bask in the sunshine of Clytie's smiles, that grew each day more tender and more rare. By degrees their walks were prolonged; by degrees they came home later in the evening and parted at the door. By degrees their neighbors began to observe this intimacy, and, for the first time, the correct Clytie became a subject of gossip.

Meantime, fortune favored Bob in other respects. He suddenly found himself, without effort on his part, in a position to command a large sum of money. The company who owned the ground adjoining Mr. Gray's claims discovered a rich lode and made liberal offers to purchase the ground owned by Mr. Gray. Dr. Duchesne was part owner, and he wrote to Mr. Gray advising him to sell. The ground was worth more to the company owning the adjoining ground than it could be to the present owners, as it could be worked to advantage in connection with ground owned by the company proposing to purchase. Mr. Gray, in reply, transmitted a power of attorney to Dr. Duchesne to sell. Mr. Gray also informed the doctor that he regarded Bob as equal owner with himself in the claim, since it was by such an arrangement that Bob had been induced to accept banishment to Red Mountain. Dr. Duchesne returned an answer to the effect that the claim should be considered as belonging in equal shares to the three, and if a sale should be consummated the proceeds should be equally divided between the three. The claim was subsequently sold for twelve thousand dollars, one-third of which was deposited in San Francisco, in Mr. Gray's name, but for Bob's use and benefit. Dr. Duchesne, in consideration of Bob's fatal facility of getting rid of money,

was requested to act as his banker, honoring his draft only for reasonable supplies.

The beautiful green of spring was giving way to the bronze hues of autumn when the transaction was consummated.

Bob was bound to Red Mountain only by his attachment to Clytie. There were many reasons why he should return to San Francisco. Miss had disappeared, and the presumption was fair that she had been brutally murdered. Regina was reported as receiving the attentions of Mr. Hopp, whom Bob did not like, as a proper cousin brother-in-law. The Free and Easy Club was becoming demoralized during the absence of their president, and some of the prettiest of the girls had been shaken in their allegiance by the tempting prospects of a rival club. Hattie Brooks had already informed her lover that, although she had been true to him until the time of writing, she could not be responsible for herself much longer. The pressure for her affections was such that she felt she must yield unless supported by the presence of the only man she had ever truly loved. To this frank and manly letter a postscript was attached informing her recent lover that she would go out of town one week to escape temptation, as her powers of resistance were exhausted. If on her return she did not find the idol of her soul, or a letter announcing the speedy return of said idol, she should be compelled to accept a substitute. "Girls are but girls," concluded this heroic creature, "and endurance has its limits. Come, darling! and see how happy I will make you."

This letter revived Bob's waning affection for Miss Brooks. He had left the city with a full determination to cut that "hoodlum broad," but the privations of mountain life taught him their value. He had enjoyed himself pretty well, on the whole, but being good was getting tiresome. Clytie was a sweet girl, but she lacked the social resources of the spirited girls of the city. She was not educated up to their standard. He now wished he had never met her; he wondered if she would feel very bad when he went away. It was almost a duty to return to the city. The young gentleman who had presumed to make love to Hattie Brooks during his absence needed to be attended to; then there were the villains who had stolen Miss. "Ah," he thought, "if it were Miss instead of Clytie, Hattie might go. One would never tire of Miss."

Bob decided therefore to return to the city. He was half inclined to slip off without any private conference with Clytie. He had not the kind of courage which arises from hardness of heart. He might pound a nail within an inch of his life, but a woman's tears upset him. And in this instance Clytie had a right to weep. According to the rules of courtship in primitive regions—any regions, in fact, but those of him free-and-easy hoodlum circle—she had a right to expect an offer of marriage. For four months he had made her his day companion. For three of those four months he had lavished upon her every token of affection. He had called her pet names, he had won her to receive his caresses, he had awakened that dormant passion which lies in every well-regulated girl's heart, and now he proposed to abandon her. It would not quite do to run away. It wouldn't do to say good-bye,

as if he had been content with the privileges of ordinary acquaintance. He must endure a parting interview, he must steel himself against her just reproaches—in a word he must play a role which his heart told him was that of villain.

Clytie had never looked prettier than when she appeared arrayed for the last walk. Her coquettish straw hat, with its bows of pink ribbon, gave an air of juvenescence to her softly pretty face. Her tender blue eyes turned upon him their dearest glances. The rose flush deepened in her soft round cheek as she met his gaze and read in his eyes the admiration he could not repress.

The night was serene and lovely. A fragrant breath of air came from the pine forests to replace that burnt out by the sun of a long July day. The moon tipped with silver the tops of the hills, but the valley yet lay in the deepening twilight. By mutual consent they avoided the village, and followed a secluded path. Clytie was loving and trusting. Though now sixteen, Clytie's heart was at rest in a babe-like innocence. Her mind had never been disturbed by thoughts of other than an honest love. If her color changed, her nerves fluttered, her eyes dropped, these were the evidences of an affection she might easily conceal, but of which she was not ashamed.

Bob contrived at last to convey to his companion the idea that, as his mission to Red Mountain was performed, he had no excuse for a longer stay. His sister needed him at home. She had not written to him to return in so many words, but he inferred from her letters that she was unhappy. It was his duty to go and see what was the matter.

Clytie listened in silence. She had not the quick perception that takes in a situation at a glance. Bob might go, but Bob certainly would return. Bob certainly would not leave her long. He would ask her to marry him when he should come back with his mother's and sister's consent.

But Bob stopped short of this desirable denouement. He paused in the walk, too, her hand in his, and passed his arm round her waist. He drew her head against his breast and kissed her soft round cheek.

"Some day," he said, in a tone that somehow became sweet and low, "some day you'll come down and pay Regie a visit. Regie will write and invite you. You'll come, little Clytie?"

Little Clytie didn't know. The proposition seemed to her a little vague. She would be glad to meet Regie—but—but—when would Bob come back?

"Don't know," answered Bob, feeling that the ice was broken. "Some of these days, perhaps."

"Perhaps! O, Bob!"

A long, deep sigh came from the depths of Clytie's heart. Bob was going away. Perhaps he might return. Perhaps amid the gayeties of the city he would forget her. How could she live without him—live in Smith's Pocket, where every one was talking of her and her city lover?

The young girl freed herself from her companion's arm and turned away. A glancing ray of moonlight touched her white face and revealed its mute agony. This form of appeal was one Bob was not used to. It touched his heart—the sweet face was so changed,

Her slender form, turned half from him, seemed to quiver in the moonlight. Her graceful head bent, and was buried in her shawl. Bob sprang forward and caught her in his arms. He thought she was about to fall.

"Dear little Clytie! Do you really love me? I'm a brute to leave you! Shall I stay? Don't cry, darling. I do love you."

These and other incoherent expressions were offered solely with a view to their consoling influence. They were for the moment sincere. Bob thought he would do anything to make her happy—anything to avoid being a witness to her grief.

The simple girl suffered herself to be consoled. She had not been taught the danger of such vague assurance of love. She saw her lover's handsome face bending over her, and felt the magnetism of his passionate gaze. The tide of feeling turned. Hope that had flown out from her heart fluttered back and imparted a delicious sensation of rest. "He loves me," she thought—"he loves me! and he will make me his wife."

Bob did not return to the city the next day. Reported new discoveries of rich quartz a few miles distant served as an excuse among the miners to whom he had communicated his intention of going. He located claims and set men to work. More cautious in his visits to Clytie, he still continued to see her nearly every day. The gossips talked worse than ever. The miners, with whom at first he had been a great favorite, began to look upon him with distrust. Clytie was the flower of the settlement, and it would go hard with the wretch who should cause a stain to rest upon her name. The trees about Smith's Pocket had strong branches, and a rope was always handy. Such threats came indirectly to his ears, but he gave them little heed. Clytie preserved her serenity. She was more gracious than ever to the village beaux, and more friendly with the village maidens. Her childlike innocence of expression and her propriety of deportment disarmed the most censorious. Thus the summer passed, and in the autumn Bob was summoned to the city.

## CHAPTER XLII.

### AN ACT OF GRACE.

We have left our hero for some time in deep disgrace. The punishment was not entirely undeserved, but we trust our readers have faith in that justice which is tempered with mercy. His offense was great, but it does not require absolute immolation. We hope, therefore, that the most austere of our lady readers will pardon a momentary lapse from the high moral plane which a hero of romance should occupy in this most virtuous half of the nineteenth century.

I have said that Mr. Gray was punished. Let it not be inferred, however, that he incurred no

other punishment than being dropped for a time out of these pages. The circle he had unintentionally invaded was one which repels with various exasperating weapons any approach which seems unmindful of its immaculate character. The audacity of the lawyer, in raising his eyes to the daughter of their pastor, was astonishing. For three days the disgraceful affair was spoken of in a whisper. The whisper grew louder. It was caught up in circles that were not immediately affected, but which, nevertheless, deemed it a duty always to speak on the side of morality. It penetrated the profane world and inspired a laugh. There only the young lawyer found apologists and defenders. If the girl was willing to be entertained, Mr. Gray could not be censured if he entertained her. The responsibility of error was divided in this world between the party who proposed and the party who consented.

The lady in this case had an advantage. Her statement of the affair met no contradiction. It differed somewhat from the facts, but Mr. Gray had sufficient manliness to let it pass unquestioned.

The following Saturday afternoon Mr. Gray was surprised at receiving a call from Miss Shaw. He had not met that young lady during the week, and naturally supposed that he was crossed out of the list of friends.

Miss Shaw paused on the threshold of the inner office.

"May I come in?" she asked. "Will I disturb you?"

"Yes, to both questions. I want to be disturbed."

She entered and took a seat at the table beside Mr. Gray.

"Do you ever get real tired of living?" she asked. "So tired that you don't know what to do with yourself?"

"Sometimes. I was somewhat in that condition of mind when you appeared."

"That's odd. I've had the blues for a week. Why shall I do?"

"Seek a change of associates."

"That's what I'm doing. Have you anything you must attend to this afternoon?"

"Nothing—unless you will let me attend to you."

"How kind you are. I was going to ask you to take me somewhere. You haven't been very good of late."

"Isn't it a little your fault?"

"It isn't my example. I've been dreadful good. How tiresome it is! But, perhaps you don't know—perhaps you have not had much experience."

"Don't be satirical, Miss Shaw."

"Don't call me Miss Shaw!—not to day. I want to be confidential; I want to talk to you as I used to talk to my father. But first let us decide what to do."

"Tell me what you would like to do."

"I think I would like to drive out to the Cliff. We won't stop—here's too many people there Saturday. After the drive—"

"Well, after the drive?"

"You shall come home with me to dinner. Mamma is away. You are not in favor with her just now. In the evening we will go to the theatre. We have not

been to the theatre together since Miss Shaw was with us."

"It has been so difficult to find you disengaged."

"Not difficult, but you have not tried very hard. Poor, dear Miss. I didn't know how fond I was of her."

"I'm afraid we shall never see her again. The city and country has been searched, and I get no clue."

"Do you know, Mr. Gray, I think Miss is living?"

"Why do you think so?"

"The spirits say so."

"But you don't think so because the spirits say so?"

"I believe it because I cannot help it. The impression grows stronger every day."

"I wish I could think so."

"Have you no faith in spirits?"

"None whatever. The more I read and think, the less reason I find to believe in them. I believe there is not a well authenticated case on record where intelligence of public importance has been first transmitted to the public through spiritual agencies. There have been rattles in Europe which we heard of by mail weeks after they were fought. There have been changes of dynasty, deaths of distinguished men, and yet these spirit mediums never tell of these things until we have heard of them through other sources."

Now, if the spirit of Miss's father can follow Miss and tell where she is, why cannot other spirits tell us when a great battle is fought in Europe—when there is a government crisis, a fall or rise in cotton, or some other great fact that would command public attention. Lo! then tell us of one great event in advance of telegraph and mail, and they will then convince the world."

"But you know, Mr. Gray, it has also been asked why Christ did not publicly appear in Jerusalem after his crucifixion and thus convince the world that he had risen."

"True, and no good reason has been given why he did not."

"But we do not infer from the fact that he did not, that he did not rise."

"Many do, and the inference is fair. If Christ had really risen and wished to convince the world that he was in a peculiar sense the Son of God, he had only to appear, after death, publicly in Jerusalem, and all Judea would have knelt at his feet. Now, after eighteen hundred years, some of the best minds in Christendom doubt if he possessed miraculous powers."

"But it was not a part of God's plan that the world should be convinced in this sudden way."

"It was a part of God's plan, as revealed in the Bible, that the world should be convinced. The Apostles of Christ were bidden to go to all lands and preach of Christ's risen from the dead. Now, don't you think they could have preached more successfully if they could have carried with them indubitable evidence of the main fact they related?"

"But the Apostles had seen him after he had risen."

"The Apostles were in appearance men like those they addressed. They had no especial claim on the reason and judgment of mankind at large. They pro-

mulgated an astounding statement—that a man had risen from his grave. Now, when such statements are made, the most convincing proof is required to command belief. The Apostles said they had seen Christ risen. The Apostles were Christ's chosen followers, and, in that capacity, not competent as witnesses before unbelievers. If they could have added to the evidence of their senses the testimony of the thousands before whom Christ had preached, but before whom he did not appear after death, they would have convinced the world of the truth of their statement. As it is, the world is unconvinced at this day, and even the part of the world we call Christendom is more infidel than Christian. Reasoning minds demand of the so-called spiritualists of the present day evidence of a like nature to that required of the Apostles. If these communications really come from spirits—they can give us indisputable evidence of the fact. In the absence of such evidence, the solid, substantial minds that in the end determine the truth or falsity of a claim, will reject the theory of spirit communications as not proven."

"But these spirits certainly tell us things unknown to us."

"Things unknown to us individually, but not things unknown to all individuals. I do not know of a pretended fact yet communicated that was not already known to some person or persons composing the community. There are portions of the world to which the telegraph does not yet reach—portions which are ten or twenty days distant from the centres of news. In these distant lands events are constantly occurring—the death of a ruler—the arrival of a ship—the birth of a prince. Let the spirits communicate some two or three of these events—with the date accurately given—and thinking men will believe. For instance, let us suppose the date of the arrival of the "Sea Nymph" at Valparaiso should be correctly given immediately upon her arrival, and as there is no telegraphic communication with Valparaiso, they will establish a strong claim to belief. Of course there is such a thing as a happy guess, but three or four such statements preclude the possibility of chance."

"Perhaps they will," said Regina.

"I doubt it. They will tell us things which we cannot prove or disprove, but it will be something new in spirit manifestations if they tell us of an important event happening at a distance, giving dates with ordinary exactness."

"I see," said Regina, petulantly, "you are obstinate as you always are. Papa was right—you were cut out for a lawyer."

"And you, Regina, are somewhat imaginative, somewhat impressible, and inclined to believe what seems fair on the face. But I don't want you to be carried away with this delusion."

"I am glad you feel a little interest in me," said Regina. "To encourage you, I'll let you think for me. Only I will believe Miss still lives."

"I will hope she does. The poor child has as yet known little but shame, suffering and sorrow."

"I don't know about that," replied Regina, gravely.

"We don't measure happiness by time."

"True; but in her happiest days a cloud was always over her. In childhood, a drunken father, a poor, un-

dejected little outcast, yet with a heart sensitive to shame, and a pride so intense that every jeering word wrung her soul with agony. Later in life, the victim of scheming villains who are yet unpunished."

"But she found one friend, one who loved her. I never more than half liked you until I knew how kind you had been to Misses."

"Miss was grateful. It is a genial error to exaggerate the services rendered by a friend."

"The error of a noble nature, such as Miss has with all her faults of temper. But our programme of entertainment is not yet complete. You have been so gallant so far that I am tempted to go farther."

"Take care not to go farther than you are willing I should follow you."

"There is no danger of that. You may come to-morrow and take me to church."

"To church! Heaven pardon me, but I am not popular now in church circles."

"Because they don't know you as I do. Will you come?"

"Have you thought of Mrs. Shaw? What will she say?"

"Mrs. Shaw, I dare say, would prefer to have me go with Mr. Hopp. But I prefer to go with you."

"Mr. Hopp seems to be quite a favorite with Mrs. Shaw."

"Yes; mamma wants me to marry. I cannot blame her, for, as you very well know, we have no fortune and she wants to provide for the future."

"But I very well know that you need not marry for a home. Our business is prosperous and increasing every day."

"But this cannot last forever. It seems as if we were living on your bounty."

"O, Regina! Don't speak so. What you have is yours as fairly as if it was derived from houses and lands. It will always be yours as long as I live."

"I know it will, but I am not sure it is quite right. Mr. Hopp says—"

"What does Mr. Hopp say?"

"I don't know that I ought to tell. But he tells mamma that we have no legal right to the earnings of the firm."

"It is not mainly in Mr. Hopp to tell you this. Your father gave me an equal interest in his business when I was poor and unknown. In return for this I was to render an equivalent in labor to the best of my ability. Mr. Shaw died, but he had not placed me in this position that I might rob his widow and children. Don't speak of this again, please."

"Thank you, I won't. I believe you are quite as likely to be correct as Mr. Hopp in a question of law, and a good deal more likely in the finer questions of the proprieties. But we are talking the afternoon away. I had no idea I had so much to say to you."

"I confess I thought your confidences were bestowed in another quarter."

"Since papa died I have had no confidante. I used to tell him everything. When I was only ten years old and was just beginning to have beaux, I would tell him who was number one, who number two, who number three, and so on. And he, as much a child as I, would make me promise not to marry one of these

young gentlemen without his consent. How absurd!"

The young girl tried to laugh, but the tears galled in her eyes, and she turned and walked to the window.

Mr. Gray sent Tim for a carriage, and soon after they were whirling gayly over the Cliff House road.

## CHAPTER XLII.

### AT NORTH BEACH.

It was a rather imprudent step in Miss Shaw to accompany Mr. Gray to church, while the storm raised by his Oakland adventure was at its height. But Miss Shaw had character enough to do what seemed to her to be right. Regarding him rather as a victim of a foolish girl's fondness than as the designing villain he was repented to be, she gave evidence of her faith by appearing with him before the very congregation he had unwittingly offended. It was imprudent, but it was courageous.

I am not prepared to assert, however, that her motive was entirely unselfish. She was well enough acquainted with the social law that governs the trial of offenses of this nature to know that his standing in society would not be seriously impaired by his indiscretion, and that he need not be champion of her sex to see him right; but the association of his name with that of Miss Fox caused a sharp tinge of jealousy. Not that she was in love with Mr. Gray. Had she not been schooling herself to receive Mr. Hopp's addresses in deference to her mother's wishes, and would a woman of her spirit receive the addresses of one man while conscious of loving another? Of course not. She answered this interrogatory without hesitation. The question was settled. She did not love Mr. Gray, but she was not quite so indifferent to him as to be willing that he should be spoken of as an especial adviser of Miss Kitty Fox.

Mr. Hopp had not yet gained the position which entitled him to remonstrate with Miss Shaw, but Mr. Hopp remonstrated with Miss Shaw's mother. Miss Shaw's mother remonstrated with Miss Shaw. The remonstrance brought on a crisis. Mr. Hopp lost all the vantage ground he had gained by six months' assiduous attention.

Meantime the time approached when the case of the People vs. Smith was to come up for final consideration. The death or absence of Miss did not affect the question at issue. The real question was as to the claim of Mrs. Smith to the rights of a widow's share in the estate of the late John Smith.

The case was set for the 14th of July. The 10th had arrived. No James Smith was yet reported. Without him the pretended widow had the case. Mother Nell

swore that if she was called into court she would deny all knowledge of the Smith family or Smith family affairs.

Regina proposed a last visit to Mrs. Rhodes. Believing, perhaps without what seemed sufficient grounds for belief, that Miss was still alive, Regina felt a deep interest in the result. Mr. Gray had little hope of ever seeing Miss again, but he had a professional interest in the case. So on the evening of the 10th they wended their way to the elegant though haunted abode of Mr. Rhodes. They were courteously received, and after a little conversation, the room was darkened and the spirits invited to put in an appearance.

No time was lost. The play of electrical lights commenced at once, and soon resolved into legible characters, as described in a previous chapter.

"How—sa—my—little—princess?" were the first words read by the medium.

"O, Papa!" exclaimed Regina. "I know it's papa. I am so glad he is here."

"Then speak to me, not of me," read the medium. "Speak to me just as you would if you saw me."

"Well, papa, I am glad you are here. Make Mr. Gray believe it is you, if you can."

"That is just what I propose to do. Mr. Gray, have you heard from James Smith yet?"

"Not a word."

"It's Mother Nell heard from him?"

"She had not, two days ago."

"Very well. We have got that man in such a state of subjection that we can predict his movements with tolerable certainty. To-day is the 10th of July. James Smith will enter your office and make himself known to you at precisely four o'clock on the afternoon of the 12th."

"I shall be glad to see him."

"If he comes promptly at the time specified, will you believe he was sent through spiritual agency?"

"No."

"On what grounds will you withhold belief?"

"On the grounds that he may be under human control and sent to my office through human agency. Let us suppose, for instance, that I had Mr. James Smith under lock and key, ready to produce at any moment. I might then with confidence predict that on the afternoon of the 14th, when the case comes up for trial, James Smith would walk into court at any hour I should designate. I could predict this, because I could make him, accidents aside, fulfill the prediction. Now, I do not know but some human being has this James Smith under lock and key, and proposes to make him call on me at the hour you have designated."

"But how could a human being announce his coming in the way it is now announced to you?"

"That question I cannot answer. There are magicians' tricks which I do not understand. I see them performed, and know they can be performed by various persons. I look upon this table and see nothing. Mrs. Rhodes reads to me certain words conveying information I did not know any human being to possess. I do not know, however, that this information is not possessed by one or more persons. I do

not know how it is communicated to Mrs. Rhodes, although I will admit that it comes to her as she represents—that is, that it appears in letters of light, which she sees, but which others cannot see."

"Your position is correct," said Mr. Rhodes. "Evidence on a question of this nature must be positive to command belief. I talked in the same way for two years. Let us see now if these spirits cannot give us some information which no human being in this State can possibly possess."

"Yes," replied Mr. Gray, "I would like something of that kind. Can you tell us," he continued, addressing the table, "if the Sea Nymph has arrived at Valparaiso?"

"The Sea Nymph has arrived at Valparaiso," was the answer.

"Can you give the date of her arrival?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"We did not mark the date at the time. As our divisions of time do not correspond with yours, we cannot fix a date for an event happening on earth by any date of our own."

"If you had been requested to note the date of her arrival, could you have done so?"

"Yes. We could have ascertained what date it was with you and remembered it."

"If the Emperor of France should die to-night, should you be likely to know of the event before it could reach us by mail?"

"It would depend upon what circle I am in. In certain circles I might know of his death at the moment of taking place, in others I might not hear of it for months."

"Could not some spirit in a circle that received immediate intelligence of such an event transmit the event to earth in advance of earthly means of communication?"

"Doubtless, if such spirit had ready means of communication with portions of the earth distant from the scene of the event. But the means of communication are very imperfect. We are not organized to gather and disseminate news. We cannot drop down on any portion of the earth as the notion may seize us, and tell our news. There are the difficulties of language, for instance. The spirit of a Frenchman who did not speak English, could not communicate through an English or American medium who did not speak French. In time these difficulties will be removed, and we shall compete with your telegraph in giving news. You must recollect, however, that ordinary earthly affairs lose much of their interest to us after we pass away, and that we have no other object in gathering news than to convince you of the fact of our existence and power to communicate."

"Do you ever expect to convince the mass of mankind of the fact of your existence and of your power to communicate?"

"We do. What you call death is a problem we have solved. We know there is no death for the spirit. This is not a matter of belief, as with you, but a positive knowledge. Now we know also that we can communicate with you, because we see our letters appear on the table and hear them read by the medium. Here

are items of knowledge. They are truths. Now, a great truth must in the end triumph. A great fact must in the end be made manifest. We expect to make mortals aware of our existence, because we do exist, and we expect to show mortals that we can communicate because we do communicate. It is a part of the unfolding law of nature. A cause begins to operate when under a general law it can produce an effect. The cause may have existed through all time, but it only begins to operate when the material upon which it acts is in a condition to respond. Thus spirits have always existed, but only in exceptional instances have they had the power to communicate until the present day.

"Is this power given them as a special gift?"

"No; it becomes theirs by the fulfillment of required conditions.

"One of the conditions is the enlightenment of man. A hundred years ago a medium would have been burned at the stake. But the medium is getting tired, and my friend Smith wants to speak. Good-night. Good-night, Regie."

"Good-night, papa."

The lights went out. For two or three minutes the table was a blank to the medium as well as to others. Then although it remained a blank to three of the party, the medium reported a spirit as present.

"Please give your name," said the medium.

"I am John Smith."

"Have you anything especial to communicate?"

"I want to speak to Mr. Gray."

"I am listening, Mr. Smith," replied that gentleman.

The medium then said:

"I am sorry, Mr. Gray, that you do not believe in us."

"I am open to conviction."

"You think you are, but you are not. Without any accurate knowledge of the laws which control our action, you establish tests in accordance with your own rules of evidence. Such proofs as you require can only be given under very advantageous circumstances."

"Still, being on this sphere, I must insist upon proofs in accordance with our rules of evidence before I can believe. If spirits cannot furnish such proofs, they cannot hope to convince men accustomed to examine evidence by the aid of pure reason."

"I leave these questions for Mr. Shaw to discuss. I would speak to you of Miss."

"Do you know where she is at present?"

"I know she is in Valparaiso, but I cannot communicate with her. She is surrounded by influences adverse to us."

"Can you not approach her as easily at Valparaiso as in San Francisco?"

"Yes, if the immediate influences around her were as favorable."

"What do you mean by immediate influences?"

"I mean personal associations. There are human beings of positive and powerful magnetism whom we cannot approach. If such an organization is in harmony with us, it becomes a powerful ally; if adverse, it resists as a spirit force which I can command."

"Is Miss associated with such a person?"

"Yes."

"Is it a man or woman?"

"A man."

"Is it O'Neil?"

"No. This person has taken her from O'Neil."

"For what purpose?"

"I cannot tell. I cannot approach him, nor read his mind."

"What character of man is he?"

"A very dangerous character."

"Does he hold Miss against her will?"

"No. He has won her confidence."

"How do you know he has won her confidence if you cannot approach her?"

"I was able to approach her during the first days of their association. Her mind was tranquil in his presence and she looked upon him as a friend."

"What is the man's name?"

"He is known as Colonel Wade."

"Colonel Wade is the man who man who was sentenced to be hanged in Dayton some months ago?"

"I don't know. I knew nothing of him until I saw him on board the Sea Nymph."

"This is a rather singular coincidence," said Mr. Gray, speaking to the company rather than to the spirit: "A man named Wade, a desperate character, was tried by a Vigilance Committee in Dayton, some time in April, and sentenced to be hanged. He managed to escape, by the aid, it is supposed, of confederates, and has not since been heard of."

"It is possible," said Mr. Rhodes, "that he may have reached the city and taken passage under an assumed name on board the Sea Nymph."

"It is possible but not at all probable. Mr. Smith," he continued, addressing the table, "what would you have me do?"

"Send a trusty agent to Valparaiso by the next steamer. I would ask you to go yourself, but you will be needed in the city when the case comes off."

"Well," said Mr. Gray, "your advice shall be followed?"

## CHAPTER XLIII.

### A HALF-EXPECTED VISITOR.

Two days later, at a quarter to four, Regina entered Mr. Gray's office. She was a little nervous, for the predictions of the spirits had excited her imagination, if their reasoning had not convinced her understanding.

"If Mr. James Smith should come," she said, "what would you think?"

"Let us wait until he comes; we can think afterwards."

"How cool you are! For my part, if this man comes after all that has been predicted, I shall faint."

Mr. Gray stood by the window. He had already observed a man, of middle age and homely aspect, standing upon the opposite sidewalk. The man was coarsely but decently dressed, his

face was bronzed with exposure—at least that portion of it that could be seen between a slouch hat pulled down over his forehead and a grizzled beard that covered his jaw.

"I have an idea," he said to his companion, "that you will have occasion to faint. There stands our man."

Regina approached the window.

"Don't frighten him away. He is said to be a brave pioneer; but he may not have the kind of courage to face a pretty woman. Let us give our friends, the 'ghos s,' a fair chance."

Miss Shaw concealed herself behind a curtain and bent one eye on the solitary figure opposite. The man drew a piece of paper from his pocket, examined it, and then continued his scrutiny of the building which had at first been the object of his regard.

At last, as if satisfied, he slowly crossed the street and was lost to the view of the silent watchers.

A moment afterward a slow and heavy footstep was heard ascending the stairs. Regina, pale and trembling, stepped into the outer office, and sank into a chair in the most retired corner.

Her abrupt entrance surprised Tim in the midst of a difficult feat of balancing, and caused a mortifying failure.

The homely stranger stood hesitatingly at the entrance, and Tim went forward to receive his commands.

"Is this Mr. Gray's office?" asked the man.

Tim replied brusquely in the affirmative. The man entered, and was ushered into the private office.

Tim, being at liberty, gallantly invited Miss Shaw to join in his amusements—an offer which that young lady silently declined.

Mr. Gray, meantime, had received his half-expected visitor.

"In what can I serve you?" he asked, politely, when his visitor was seated.

"I was told to come here, and to ask for Mr. Gray and to talk to no one else," replied the man.

"I am Mr. Gray, and we are alone."

"If you're the man I want to see, you'll know my business when I tell you that Mother Nell sent me here."

"I know Mother Nell. Are you Mr. James Smith?"

"James Smith is my name."

"Do you live in the city?"

"Here off and on. Been in Idaho better'n two years."

"When did you leave Idaho?"

"Four or five weeks ago."

"Did you know, when you decided to come to the city, that a suit was pending in which you might be interested?"

"Didn't know it when I started; Mother Nell told me something about it."

"What caused you to come just at this time?"

"Nothing in particular. Got tired prospectin', and thought I'd come down and stay a spell."

"You are come just in time. A suit to determine who are the heirs of your deceased brother's estate will be tried the day after to-morrow."

"Didn't know when. Mother Nell told me something about the suit."

"When I said your deceased brother's estate, I took it for granted that John Smith, of Smith's Pocket, was your brother. Can you prove that he was your brother?"

"Don't know. We wasn't together much. Don't remember many people that knew we were brothers. Can you not recall one person now living that knew by common report that you and John Smith were brothers?"

"There's Mother Nell."

"Mother Nell is not a reliable witness. She has a dread of appearing in court."

"I know. She got into trouble a few years ago, and is afraid it will come up against her."

"Think of some other person."

"Let me see. There's a saloon-keeper named Drake somewhere in the city—if he isn't dead. He knew John and me fifteen years ago."

"Were you married in Stockton in 1852?"

"Yes."

"Is the man who performed the ceremony living?"

"No; he died more'n fifteen years ago."

"Is the woman that you married still living?"

"Was two years ago. Haven't seen her lately. Spect she is the woman that Mother Nell said was trying to palm herself off as John's widow."

"Would you know the woman if you should see her?"

"Know her! I'd know her 'mong ten thousand. Mighty fine-looking woman, but a regular devil."

"Well, Mr. Smith, this woman pretending to be your brother's widow and the mother of your brother's daughter, has caused your brother's daughter to be carried off. We do not know if Miss is living or not. If she still lives, she is, of course, your brother's heir. If she is dead you are his heir, as next of kin, if you can establish the relationship."

A long conversation followed, which we need not repeat. Mr. Gray satisfied himself that his visitor was in fact the brother of John Smith, as had been represented both by Mother Nell and by the communication he had received through Mrs. Rhodes. The causes which led to his opportune return were still a mystery. Mr. Smith was not conscious of being influenced to visit the city. He had come, he said, of his own accord. It was his habit to come to town once in two or three years, and remain until he got tired of city life, or had exhausted his resources. He did not seem much elated at the prospect of becoming his brother's heir, nor much interested in his niece. He professed his willingness, however, to go into court and testify to facts.

Mr. Gray had made provision to keep this important witness subject to his order, without seeming to place him in custody. An experienced member of the detective force took him in charge when he left Mr. Gray's office, in the friendly guise of a boon companion, not only to secure his appearance when wanted, but to guard against any possible approach of the enemy.



## CHAPTER XLIV.

## THE TRIAL.

The case came up at the day appointed. The court-room was thronged. Mrs. Smith, serene and handsome, sat by the side of her counsel, and, within supporting distance, were several fashionable friends. Near her, devouring her beautiful face with his greedy eyes, was young Joseph Fox, whose infatuation was the talk of his circle.

The possible dramatic effect of the trial was impaired by the order in which the rules of the court required evidence to be presented. Had Mrs. Smith been called upon the stand, and testified as she had at the preliminary examination—that she was the widow of the late John Smith, of Smith's Pocket—the subsequent appearance of James Smith would have crushed her to the earth. But Mr. Gray had first to present his side of the case. His one important witness was James Smith.

Mrs. John Smith was conversing with Mr. Hopp when Mr. James Smith was called. She looked up with an air of composure, and beheld issue from the witness-room the man whose visit to Mr. Gray has been described. It was observed that she slightly changed color, but her presence of mind did not desert her. She followed him with her eye, as he mounted the witness-stand, with no other expression than surprise and curiosity on her face.

"Who is this witness?" asked Mr. Hopp, in a whisper.

"I don't know him—never saw him before."  
Mr. James Smith was sworn. He gave his name, age, occupation; was the brother of John Smith, of Smith's Pocket; was uncle of Melissa Smith; knew when his brother was married; met him occasionally after his marriage, and after the birth of his daughter; knew when his brother's wife deserted him; had often met his brother's wife since her desertion of his brother, and would know her anywhere he should see her.

"Do you see the woman your brother married in court?" asked Mr. Gray.

"I do not."

"Look well at the ladies present. Is there one that in any marked manner resembles her?"

The witness looked at the three or four ladies who sat near Mrs. Smith and at Mrs. Smith. Mrs. Smith bore his regard calmly.

"None of these ladies look like my brother's wife more'n one woman always looks like another."

"Are you personally acquainted with the defendant?"

"I am—or was."

"Do you recognize the defendant in one of the ladies present?"

The witness pointed to Mrs. Smith.

"When did you form the acquaintance of the plaintiff?"

"About fifteen years ago."  
"Were you intimately acquainted?"  
"Pretty intimately—for a time."  
"Did you ever sustain any other relation to her than that of ordinary acquaintance or friend?"

"Yes?"  
"What other relation?"  
"She was, for several months, my wife."

Mrs. Smith smiled. Mr. Hopp, who had been growing apprehensive, took new courage from her smile. The witness was given to the other side for cross-examination. Mr. Hopp was quite unprepared for such testimony, but Mrs. Smith prompted him.

"You say," said Mr. Hopp, "that you would know Mrs. John Smith, if you should see her? How long since you have seen her?"

The witness hesitated.

The question was repeated.

"I saw her between two and three years ago."

"Where was she at that time?"

"In San Francisco."

"Do you know if she still resides in San Francisco?"

"I believe she does."

"Do you not know that she does?"

"No; I don't know she does."

"When did you last hear of her or know of her living in this city?"

"I know of her living in this city two years or more ago."

"Are you sure that you have not seen her within two years?"

"Perhaps I have."

"When did you last see her?"

"Well," said the witness, "if you must know, I saw her four days ago."

"You saw her four days ago! Why did you not say so at first?"

"Because I only saw her for a few minutes."

"Still you saw her and conversed with her?"

"Yes."

Mr. Gray understood by the drift of these questions that Mr. James Smith knew there was a reason why Mrs. John Smith should not be produced in court, and that Mrs. James Smith hoped to break the force of Mr. James Smith's testimony by involving him in petty contradictions. Mr. Hopp, having gained a temporary advantage, proceeded with his cross-examination.

"Where does Mrs. John Smith reside?"

"I don't know."

"Where was she when you saw her, four days ago?"

"In a saloon on ——— alley."

"Where is ——— alley —between what streets?"

"Between Pacific and Broadway."

"What is the name of the saloon?"

"I believe they call it 'The Sailors' Home.'"

An officer was immediately dispatched to The Sailors' Home in search of Mrs. John Smith.

In fifteen minutes the officer returned. The Sailors' Home was closed, and no woman bearing that name was known in that vicinity.

Mr. Gray contended that the presence of Mrs. John Smith was not essential. Mr. James Smith's testimony, unless successfully impeached, was conclusive.

He had other witnesses, by which he would establish

the fact of the witness's identity. These witnesses were called. Two citizens of repute testified that they had known James Smith for fifteen years, and that, so far as they knew, he had always borne that name. One of them (Drake), a saloon-keeper, testified that he had known both John Smith and James Smith, and that he knew them by common report to be brothers.

Much corroborative testimony was introduced, with which we need not weary the reader. The case for the plaintiff seemed impregnable.

In the face of this evidence Mr. Smith testified that she had married John Smith, that she was the mother of Melissa Smith, that she had never been divorced from John Smith, and that she had never seen the man who called himself James Smith until she saw him in court.

The nerve and audacity of the woman were grand. She imposed upon her lawyer, upon the court, and upon the spectators. If the case had been submitted, it is probable that, in the doubt which to believe, the jury would have given a verdict for the defense.

Mr. Gray rose for the summing up with the feeling that the sympathies of the audience were against him. Miss was not present, and Mrs. Smith was, Mrs. Smith was in favor in high circles. It was not probable that a woman in her position would swear to a lie.

He began his argument. He depicted the neglected childhood of Miss, and reminded the jury that the woman who claimed to be her mother was living in luxury at the time, in intimate relations with a man not the father of Miss. She had discovered the relationship only when Miss was discovered to be an heiress. She had since conspired to ruin the child that she might possess herself of the child's share in the estate. All this was in proof. He only wished the jury to bear the facts in mind.

He then reviewed the testimony of James Smith. His identity was established beyond possible doubt. The defense had not succeeded in their effort to impeach his testimony. His credibility was unshaken. The jury had no choice but to accept his evidence. He testified that he had married the woman claiming to be his brother's widow about the time his brother had married. It was a question of facts. By all the rules of evidence Mr. James Smith was entitled to belief. The defendant occupied the unfortunate position of a woman who, according to her own story, for twelve years forgot husband and child—to return to the latter when, by an unexpected chance, it became possessed of a fortune.

The speech was compact, solid and eloquent. As an argument it was conclusive—as an appeal it was powerful. It produced a deep impression on the spectators, and the jury followed him with rapt attention to the end.

Mr. Hopp rose with the disadvantage of having to review evidence he had not anticipated. Mr. Smith had solemnly and steadfastly assured him that there was no such person as James Smith, yet he found such a man on the witness-stand. He had to strike out a new line of defense, attack what he had not known to exist, meet new issues which he had not time to consider—his confidence in his client's truthfulness, even with himself, was shaken.

It was remarked by lawyers that Mr. Gray had never

made so strong an argument or Mr. Hopp so weak a one.

The case was given to the jury, and, after an hour's deliberation, they returned with a verdict for the plaintiff. Miss was legally free from the woman who had claimed to be her mother, and, if living, undisputed heir to her father's estate.

## CHAPTER XLV.

## A WOMAN OF RESOURCES.

Mrs. Smith was furious at the result of the trial. She complained loudly that she was the victim of a conspiracy. The man named James Smith was an adventurer, taking advantage of some personal resemblance to pass himself off as James Smith. If her case had been well managed the fraud would have been exposed.

"Madame," replied Mr. Hopp, "you have assured me, time and again, that no such man as James Smith existed."

"How could I know?" replied the irate widow. "I only lived with John Smith a little more than a year. How could I know how many brothers he had?"

"You admit, then, that your husband may have had a brother?"

"Of course he may. Don't men always deceive us?"

"Then, if your husband may have had a brother, why may not this man be his brother?"

"Perhaps he is; but he lies when he says I married him."

"That, certainly, is a point on which you ought to be well-informed. A woman in these days may have a number of husbands, but she can generally count them on her fingers. We have lost this case because you were not frank with me."

"Of course it is my fault! A man never commits a stupidity but he throws the blame upon the nearest woman."

"The stupidity in this case was in placing reliance upon your statements. Had I known that there was a James Smith to spring upon me, I would have been ready to receive him."

"But Mr. Gray found out that there was such a person."

"Mr. Gray was in search of such a person—I was not. You thought you could profit by keeping the weak points of your case from your lawyer."

"Well," said Mr. Smith, "what shall we do now? Can the case be appealed?"

"Yes; but it will cost money. You will have to pay expenses, give bonds, and secure new counsel."

"Are you going to throw me off?"

"You have thrown me off. I won't be made a spectacle of in court for any woman's whim. You have

too many confidants, yet you refuse to make a confidant of your legal adviser. Too much intrigue has ruined your prospects."

Mrs. Smith was silent. It was necessary to change her tactics. She realized that she had relied too much on her own slender mental resources, and too little on her charms of person and manners. Mr. Hopp was a man, and might be bound to her interests even though he knew the whole truth. Hopp was clever, subtle, patient, and rich. She might use Hopp's brain and money to recover lost ground.

They were sitting in Mrs. Smith's parlor in the Lick House. They were alone. Poor Joseph Fox had been sent home with an injunction not to return until the next day.

Mrs. Smith reflected that she had sinned for nothing. The sin did not trouble her, but the lack of results did. She was financially ruined. She had expended the five thousand dollars she had managed to withhold from Mr. Gray, and now the two hundred dollars a month, which the court had allowed her pending the suit, was lost. Something must be done, or she would drift back into the old, hated life.

"Mr. Hopp," she said, in her sweetest tone, in which there was a touch of sadness; "I was unjust—women, when disappointed, always are. Can you forgive me?" and she held out her hand.

The hand was white and shapely. Mr. Hopp had often thought that its caress would be sweet. He took it and held it between his own.

"I have not been frank with you," she continued. "I did not dare to tell you the truth. You were only my legal adviser—you were not my friend."

"That," said Mr. Hopp, "was your fault."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Quite sure."

"Would you not abandon me if I should tell you something very terrible?"

"I should abandon you only if you tell me that which is not true."

"I wish I had trusted you at first."

"I wish you had."

Mrs. Smith was silent for a moment, and then, with her handsome head reclining against the cushion of her chair, in a position which revealed her features in their most harmonious aspect, the light falling over her shoulder, she rejoined:

"I have had a hard life. Born and bred in luxury, I found myself approaching womanhood without friends or resources. I came to this State, and I married. My husband was a man without education or refinement, and I grew tired unto death of my bondage. I left him, and in time formed another alliance. The years passed with varying fortunes. One day I lived in affluence, and the next was without house or home. One day the man whose fortunes I shared unfolded to me a scheme by which our fortunes might be secured. That scheme was to personate his brother's wife—a woman still living, but who dared not claim her own name and heritage. He promised that, in the event of success, the fortune should be absolutely mine, to use as I pleased. I accepted the proposition. I successfully personated Mrs. John Smith, and I became in law the mother of her daughter. But the daughter never for a moment believed that I was her

mother. She knew by some instinct that I was an impostor. While the daughter lived I had no security, and I conspired against her. It was wicked, but one of us had to go to the wall. Our antagonism was silent, but deep and determined. I then thought I would crush her without seeming to do so. I allowed her to drift toward ruin, knowing that the lower she sank the less dangerous she would be. Chance threw her in the way of an old friend, from whom I had carefully guarded her. You know the rest. I am Mrs. James Smith. That man who appeared against me yesterday is the husband I abandoned twelve years ago."

"Madam—"

"Don't call me madam!—it sounds so cold! This may be the last time we shall meet; but, in my forlorn condition, I crave sympathy and affection. Come nearer; let me look into your eyes and see if you are still my friend."

The lawyer drew his chair beside that of his fair client. She leaned toward him, looked into his eyes with a soft, pleading gaze, and let her head fall upon his shoulder.

"I know you will not desert me," she continued. "This case is all I have; win it for me, and what you ask of me shall not be refused. Miss is dead, and the property of right belongs to my husband. You saw him yesterday. I ask you if he is the man for a woman like me?"

Mr. Hopp was well schooled in the intrigue of courts of law, but not in that of courts of love. Ambition had been his mistress in youth, and in early middle-age a budding girl had enthralled herself in his heart. His love for Regina had preserved him from alliances in which affection was a controlling element; but, man-like, he could distinguish between senses and sentiment. He did not suppose for a moment that Mrs. Smith cared for him; but she was handsome, elegant, and young enough to be desirable. The tenderness she simulated was as close an approach to love as he desired from any woman but the one he could not win.

"He is not a man you could love," Mr. Hopp responded; "and money would be a poor compensation for a life passed with an uncongenial companion. But you say Miss is dead. Do you know she is dead, or simply express your belief?"

"I will tell you what I know. Hereafter you shall not complain of want of confidence on my part. When Mr. Gray announced in court that he expected to secure a witness named James Smith, I understood that he had got his clue from Miss. I did not then believe this James Smith to be living, as his death was only reported. But the clue was a dangerous one in the hands of a skillful lawyer, and the necessity of separating him from Miss became more urgent than ever. It was arranged, therefore, between Mr. Waters, whom you know, and a man named O'Neill, to carry her off. O'Neill had an acquaintance named Jake, who was the lover of one of Mrs. Shaw's servants. A little money induced Jake to open the door after the family had retired, to Waters and O'Neill. The child was made insensible with chloroform, and carried on board the bark *Sea Nymph*, bound to Valparaiso. O'Neill was to go with her, under an arrange-

ment that he should receive ten thousand dollars if he married her or furnished proofs of her death. O'Neill sailed with the vessel, and so, I supposed, did Miss, until the discovery of her body led to a different conclusion."

"You think, then, that it was the body of Miss that was found in the bay?"

"I have no doubt of it. The resemblance of hair and teeth was perfect. The other portions were not recognizable."

"But physicians gave the opinion that the body was that of a mature woman—of a woman, as I understood, who was not a virgin."

"A physician's opinion in a case of that kind is not worth a rush. It was not pretended that the girl was enceinte, and the condition of the body was such that no intelligent opinion could be based on any microfact. Even if the physicians were correct, we do not know what may have happened to Miss."

"If Miss is really dead, the only real question is if the estate shall come to you, as John Smith's widow, or to this James Smith, as John Smith's brother."

"That is it in a nutshell. Is it still possible to win?"

"It is possible to win, provided Miss is really dead."

"Then," said the woman, with a flush rising on her cheeks and a soft light beaming in her handsome eyes,

"I feel sure of success. You know now how wicked I am, and you do not despise me. I shall owe everything to you, and I shall not prove ungrateful."

The lawyer replied by pressing her hand to his heart.

"I am afraid," added the lady, after a short pause, "that we shall need to hold frequent consultations. There are so many things to talk over, you know."

"Yes," assented Mr. Hopp, "there will be a good many things to talk over. Suppose we outline our plan of proceeding this evening?"

"Whenever you like," was the soft reply.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

### FROM VALPARAISO.

"Well, Mr. Gray," said Regina, the evening after the trial, "I hope you won't make fun of the spirits any more."

"The spirits are demonstrating their right to respectful treatment," he replied. "I have just now received a letter from Valparaiso."

"From Valparaiso!—from Miss?"

"Not exactly from Miss, but Miss is there. It is simply wonderful! The man who think he knows anything is a fool."

"That's a very important discovery to make," replied Regina, dubiously. "But tell me about the letter. May I read it?"

"The letter, I regret to say, is slightly profane. It was not intended for a lady to read."

"But who is it from?"

"It is signed 'A Friend.' I suspect it is from O'Neill."

"Let me see it; I'll skip the hard words."

"If you'll promise to skip the hard words, you may read it. Anticipating this desire, I have drawn my pencil through the expressions you would not know the meaning of."

Mr. Gray produced a letter, which Regina eagerly read, forgetting, I am afraid, to skip the words marked to be omitted.

In full the letter was as follows:

MR. GRAY:—If you care a damn for Miss, come and take care of her. The devil has got her, and his name is Wade.

A FRIEND.

"Wade!" replied Regina—"that is the name—"

"The name that we spoke of the other evening. When man's reason fails, he falls back on woman's intuition. [What shall I do?]

Regina's handsome countenance assumed a grave expression.

"Can't you send some one?" she said. "This Colonel Wade is a desperate character."

"Is not that a sufficient reason why I should go myself?"

Regina's handsome countenance assumed a still more grave expression.

"Come," said Mr. Gray, "your perception has been clearer than mine all through this business. Tell me what you think I ought to do. The Panama steamer sails to-morrow at eleven o'clock. It will connect at the Isthmus with the British steamer for Valparaiso. In twenty-five days I can be in that city."

"And this letter has been twenty-five days coming. It is dated June 18."

"Yes; if I go to-morrow two months will have elapsed after the writing of that letter before I can reach Valparaiso. There is no time to lose."

"Let us put our spiritual telegraph into operation," said Regina; "it may tell us if they are still in Valparaiso."

Mr. Gray smiled.

"You are still a skeptic?" she asked.

"I confess I am. I confess, too, that I am bewildered. I have always followed the dictates of my reason, and now my reason is opposed to something it cannot comprehend. I yield, but am not convinced. Miss lives—of that this letter gives ample proof. Did the intelligence that converses with us through Mrs. Rhodes know that she lived or make a happy guess?"

"It has made two happy guesses," said Regina. "It said that James Smith would arrive, and James Smith did arrive. It said that Miss was in Valparaiso and Miss is in Valparaiso."

"You are right. Let us put our spiritual telegraph in operation."

They proceeded without delay to the residence of Mrs. Rhodes.

After the usual preparation Mr. Shaw announced himself in the usual manner.

He congratulated Mr. Gray upon the result of the trial, and cautioned him to be on his guard against new combinations on the part of Mrs. Smith. He then said:

"What do you think of your letter from Valparaiso?"

"Do you know that I have received a letter from Valparaiso?"

"I was present you and Regie were discussing its contents."

"Can you tell me the contents of the letter?"

The medium read from the table the letter, word for word, as it has been given to the reader.

"This is very remarkable," said Mr. Gray. "No one but Miss Shaw and myself are acquainted with the contents of this letter."

"It is remarkable from your standpoint of view, but not from ours. I will offer a further proof of the fact that I was present when you gave the letter to Regie, by stating the object of your visit here this evening."

"Please do so."

"You wish to consult Mr. Smith, and myself as to the advisability of proceeding to Valparaiso."

"You are right," said Mr. Gray; "what do you advise?"

"It is not necessary for you to go in person. An agent can be selected who will accomplish all you could, and you will be needed here."

"In Mr. Smith of the same opinion?"

"He is. I will let Mr. Smith speak for himself."

There was the usual wait of two or three minutes, and then the medium resumed:

"Since you were here, Mr. Gray, I have succeeded in approaching my daughter. I can see that her mind is tranquil. I do not know what villainy Colonel Wade may have in view, but so far he has not excited her apprehensions. She has had no cause to distrust him. She will embrace the first opportunity to return to San Francisco. Send a discreet and intelligent man with a letter to assure her that he comes from yourself, and all will be well."

"I have already made preparations to send an agent," replied Mr. Gray, "but was in doubt about going myself."

"We don't think it necessary. you will be needed here."

Leaving Mr. Gray and Regie to indulge in an hour's conversation with Mr. and Mrs. Rhodes, and afterwards to indulge in a long, confidential talk on the way home, I embrace this opportunity to address a word to the reader. The workings of the spiritual telegraph are so little understood, that many will regard the revelations here recorded as wild, fanciful, and utterly unfounded in fact. This conclusion, however, would be erroneous. While the writer does not claim that these revelations took place precisely in the order described, he assures the reader that the communications here recorded furnish a parallel to those of which he has been an eye and ear witness. In no respect have these communications been more extraordinary in character or conclusive in development than communications which have been received through different mediums by scores of persons now residing in this city. The case of Miss, as far as she has been traced in her forced wanderings by spiritual agencies, has its precise parallel in real life. We have only taken the liberty of substituting a girl in the place of a man, who was believed by his friends to be dead, but who was reported through this unknown and mysterious agency, which, for convenience sake, we termed the spiritual telegraph, to be living in a foreign land. Subsequent developments proved the spiritual telegraph to be correct. In other instances,

where I have introduced spiritual agency, or an agency claiming to be spiritual, I have confined myself closely to the construction of cases parallel to those that have come under my personal observation. The use of this agency in works of fiction, while kept in strict accordance with actual developments, is as legitimate as the use of the ordinary telegraph.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

Colonel Wade had desired to experience the sensation of having performed a generous act. The desire was laudable, but could hardly be expected to inspire profound confidence in his ordinary rules of action. Sentiments of that nature depend much upon the state of the blood.

But Colonel Wade was sincere at the moment. The hearing of Miss on the night of the storm had touched a responsive chord in his heart. Physically insensible to fear himself, he admired fearlessness in man or woman. Afterward, when she confided to him the perilous situation in which she was placed, he had promised to protect her. We have seen how he fulfilled that promise.

He passed out of the hotel with the band of his new charge in his own. He reflected that he was a man of thirty-five—she a girl of about fourteen. The desire to experience the sensation of having performed a generous action still actuated him. It suggested to him that a decent regard to appearances must be observed.

Miss was placed in temporary lodgings in a respectable hotel. The landlady was requested to take Miss under her especial charge. So far the colonel acquitted himself of the self-imposed duties of his position in an exemplary manner. Had he sat weekly under the administration of our worthy Dr. Fox, he could not have done better.

Miss applied herself to the study of Spanish. Her quick perception and retentive memory enabled her to accomplish in a week what an ordinary girl would have accomplished in a month. Colonel Wade, who paid her a short visit every afternoon, was astonished at her rapid progress.

As days passed he was astonished also at the improvement in her appearance. She had not struck him at first as a pretty child. Here was a face to remember, but hardly, at first glance, one to love. Gradually, however, her features grew in harmony and beauty. The transformation which often takes place in girls of her age was visible in her. Her splendid black eyes became softer in their expression, her cheeks rounder, her lips more full and red. Her clear, dark complexion assumed a transparent brilliancy that was sometimes dazzling. Her countenance, usually grave for a child, would occasionally light up with a rare and tender smile. Her supple and graceful figure developed into more womanly proportions.

As these budding beauties unfolded under Colonel Wade's experienced eye, he began to regard her with a certain pride and affection. It was pleasant to be the protector of a young girl who attracted admiring glances whenever she appeared in public. Fortune had favored him during his sojourn in Valparaiso; and, with the superstition inherent in the true gambler's nature, he had ascribed her favors to his connection with Miss. She seemed to have brought him good luck at a moment when a little good luck was exceedingly desirable. In recognition of these services, he presented Miss with a wardrobe an American belle of four or five might have envied. He not only bought her dresses of every color and variety of material, but he made her toilet a study. A ribbon that harmonized with her complexion less than another was cast aside. There might be but little difference in shade, but that little difference was essential in his eyes.

Miss experienced for the first time the intoxicating sensation arising from a consciousness of a power to please. The contemptuously heaped upon her neglected childhood had impressed her with a feeling that this power was not hers. She had been dimly conscious that she owed to compassion rather than admiration the friendship of Mr. Gray. His love for her was not less prized on that account, but it had not touched her vanity. He had taken her to his heart because she was poor, neglected, ignorant, and despised—not because her personal qualities inspired admiration. Now the sweet consciousness stole upon her that she possessed this much-coveted power to please. Under their influence her character underwent some change. The hardness and defiance formerly visible in her bearing were the product of a consciousness that she was not lovable, united with a disposition to disparage girls who did not possess. Clytie's superior beauty and softness of manner had inspired her with a dislike that she had tried to persuade herself was contempt. It was simply the envy of a proud and undisciplined nature.

But, while Miss became more gentle in expression, more graceful in beauty, more suave and decorous in speech, she lost none of the piquancy and originality that constituted the charm of her childhood days. She was as frank and fearless and ardent as ever. Her intellect had ripened early by reflection at an age when happier children are too joyous to think, and now gave promise of unusual brilliancy. The blasé man of the world found in her a charming companion.

Let it not be supposed that Miss had forgotten the friends from whom she had been so ruthlessly separated. The sense of gratitude she experienced for one who had done so much to make her life pleasant did not impair her affection for her earlier friends. The colonel had promised to restore her to her friends, and she waited with confidence the fulfillment of that promise. Once or twice, when she had reminded him of his promise, a shadow had come over his face, as if in reproach of her eagerness to leave him. So she waited, dimly conscious that any movement of her own to communicate with her friends would incur his displeasure.

During three months Colonel Wade enjoyed the sensation arising from the performance of a generous act. The novelty of the situation began to wear off. The

task he had imposed upon his lawless disposition was more burdensome than he had imagined. Fifteen years before he had loved a coquette, and for fifteen years he had lived without faith in women. Better women had since loved him, and, with his heart untouched, he had yielded to their charms. Now, at the mature age of thirty-five, a little girl had become necessary to his happiness. Should he fulfill his promise and return her to her friends? Her friends would thank him, doubtless, but take good care to keep her out of his sight.

One cool afternoon in August Miss and the daughter of the landlady were sauntering through the Plaza. The air was crisp and cool, and the south wind came with a flavor of snow and ice. The companion of Miss was a dark-eyed Chileño, not more than fifteen years of age, but in appearance a young woman. They walked leisurely along, chatting merrily, criticising, as girls of all nations will, such of their fellow-idlers as seemed most susceptible of criticism. The walks were pretty well filled, and among the throng were many whom Miss recognized as Americans. One, especially, attracted her attention, perhaps because she remembered having encountered him twice or three times in her walk, and each time had been sensible of a quick and scrutinizing regard. He was apparently a man of the middle class, forty-five or fifty years of age, plainly but respectably dressed, having the appearance of an ordinary citizen of the model Republic.

"Mira!" exclaimed the vivacious companion of Miss, "el Americano."

And the dark-eyed senorita drew her mantle of crimson and gold across the lower part of her face, so that only a low, dusky brow and a pair of handsome black eyes could be seen.

Miss looked up. The American was approaching from a walk that led, at a little distance in advance, into the one in which they were. Looking at him more intently, she observed in his hand, which he held against his breast, the upper edge of what appeared to be a letter.

Miss paused instinctively. In foreign lands little visited by Americans, all Americans are acquaintances and friends.

"Buenos tardes, señoritas," said the man, with a bad Spanish accent.

"Good afternoon," responded Miss. "I am an American."

"I thought you was," replied the gentleman, "but I wasn't sure. Does your friend speak English?"

"A few words only. Are you from San Francisco?"

"Arrived yesterday. Are you from San Francisco?"

"Yes."

"Have you been here long?"

"About three months."

The man hesitated for a moment, regarding Miss with quick glances of his keen, gray eyes.

"There is a young American lady somewhere in Valparaiso," he said, at length, "whom I wish to find. She is a friend of a friend of mine—a Mr. Gray."

Miss was about to utter an exclamation, which a gesture from her new acquaintance checked.

"I know you now," he continued. "You are the young lady I want to find. You are taller than you

were described. ] and—pardon me—prettier. Does your companion comprehend what we say?"

"No. Do you come from Mr. Gray? Have you a letter for me?"

"One question at a time, please. If I am rightly informed, the gentleman in whose charge you are will not thank me for putting in an appearance. I know him of old, and don't care to renew the acquaintance unless it becomes positively necessary."

"Do you mean Colonel—"

"Don't mention names. That little girl's ears are wide open, and she looks as if she might put two and two together and count four. I want to see you alone for fifteen minutes."

"Well," said Miss: "to-morrow I will walk here alone."

"That will do. Now walk with me a few steps, and arrange that pretty mantle so that I can slip something into your hand without being seen."

Miss moved slowly along by her companion—the strange gentleman on the other side. Soon she felt a letter slipped into her hand, and the gentleman, bidding her good afternoon, with a *buenos tardes* for her companion, raised his hat and walked off in the opposite direction.

The young Chilean damsel began to rally Miss on her new conquest. To these imaginative and ardent creatures every man is a possible lover, no matter what may be his age or personal appearance.

Miss replied with less than her usual spirit, and soon returned home. Looked secretly in her own room, she looked at the letter for the first time. It was in Mr. Gray's hand-writing. She knew the firm, bold characters well. She opened it and read:

SAN FRANCISCO, July 14, 1880.

DEAR LISSY:—Trust the bearer of this as you would the writer. We long for your return. Your suit is worn. I would write more, but I do not know whose hands this letter may fall into. Regina sends her love. Your waiting friend,  
JOHN GRAY.

She kissed the signature time and again. It was Mr. Gray who had sent this man to take her home. It was Mr. Gray who was waiting for her return. She experienced a moment of the most profound happiness she had ever known as she read again and again the characters a beloved hand had traced.

At last the letter was laid on the sweet, soft pillow, where favored letters have laid since the art of writing was invented, and the young girl began to think.

Would Colonel Wade let her go? Would Colonel Wade give her up at the call of her young guardian? The answer that her heart gave to these questions caused the blood to rise to her temples. She had interpreted with a woman's glance the nature of the love that brought the handsome colonel every day to her side. She knew this mature, self-willed, reckless man loved her with such a love as a man of his nature could experience.

These reflections were interrupted by a knock on the door. A servant had come to summon her to the parlor, where Colonel Wade was waiting.

The colonel received her gravely, and, kissing her cheek, as was his custom, placed her in a chair.

"The mail steamer is in," he said, "and it brings news from California."

"What news?" she asked. "Anything that concerns me?"

"Yes; your suit is won. It's in all the papers; but they think you are dead."

"Well," she said, in pained by his grave manner "we know I am not."

He bent over her, passing his arm around her waist.

"Let them think so, Lissy. Let us remain here or go to some other land where no one knows us. Who has a better right to you than I?"

Miss sat in trembling silence. With all her courage she dreaded the power of this man, who had made himself in one sense her master.

"I love you, Lissy—I love you," he continued drawing her gently to his side. "I cannot part with you. Look up, my darling! Tell me that you will be my wife."

She looked up to his face, and her frank, fearless eyes encountered his passionate gaze.

"I can't be your wife, Colonel Wade. I am only a child. You have been a true friend, and I love and honor you as such."

He turned from her in silence, and walked across the room. His face was dark and his stormy eyes gleamed with half-suppressed fury. At last he came and stood before her.

"I expected this answer," he said, in a low sad tone. "You are young, rich, and beautiful. The world is open to you, and a brilliant future awaits you. I am past the age you call young, and my name is blackened with what you call crimes. Still, child as you are, I love you. Call me selfish; tell me I am a villain—a coward! I can bear these taunts better than can bear to lose you."

"You need not lose me," he replied; "you need not part with me. Take me to San Francisco, and I will love you as long as I live."

"I love me as a child loves its father. I don't want love—I want you, heart, soul, body—you, my life, my love, my mistress, my little wife."

He bent as he spoke, and with his resistless arm, raised her to his breast. He covered her face and lips with passionate kisses, and whispered in her ears the most ardent expressions of love.

In her struggle to free herself the letter that she had placed in her bosom fell to the floor. He saw her name, and, with an oath, threw her back in the chair, stooped and picked up the letter.

"So!" he said, "you have correspondents! Shall I read this letter?"

"Read it!" she replied, with a flash of the old defiance in her eyes.

He read the letter, placed it in the envelope, and put it in his pocket.

"When did you receive this?" he asked.

"To-day."

"Who gave it to you?"

"A man—I don't know his name."

"A man you might trust as you would the writer! A man who hopes to steal you away from me and take you back to that white-livered lawyer. Do you imagine that I will let you go?"

"Yes."

"Well, for once your marvelous instinct served you

badly. You can marry no man but me. For three months you have lived under my protection—for three months I have visited you every day, and every day you have been seen in public with me. Do you know what people say?"

"I don't care what people say."

"You shall care. I meant you no harm. I have been careful of your reputation, and intend to return you to your friends as pure as when I first beheld you. But people say that you are my mistress, and I give you an opportunity to become my wife."

The young girl smiled scornfully. Colonel Wade committed a fatal error when he forfeited his claim to her gratitude and affection.

"You smile!" he continued. "Do you not know that you are in my power?"

"You are stronger than I—you can crush me between your two hands; but you cannot make me live an hour after I wish to die."

He looked for a moment into her clear, calm eyes.

"That is true," he said, bowing his head. "I ought to have remembered the light of the storm. You have a rare spirit. You are a glorious girl! No, child, I dare not harm you."

He seated himself at a little distance, regarding her with a kind of awe. His eyes, in which the fire of passion was now quenched, dwelt upon her face with mournful tenderness.

The young girl approached, knelt by his side, and took his hand.

"You are yourself now," she said, gently. "We will go to San Francisco."

"Do you love this Mr. Gray, Lissy?"

"Not as you understand love. He has been to me father, brother, friend—and a true, brave man could be to a helpless girl."

"And you want to go back and marry him?"

"I never thought of marrying him. I do not know as I wish to be his wife. But I would do anything in my power to make him happy. If I was in Heaven, and he wanted me on earth, I would come to him."

"You love him as a sister. You will love some other man as a lover. Lissy! Lissy! I cannot give you up without a hope. You shall go back to San Francisco, but with me and in my time. If this man who has come for you crosses my path, I will kill him! Do you hear?"

"Yes; but if the man goes back without me, Mr. Gray will come himself. You won't kill him!"

"Why do you think so?"

"Because I won't let you."

The colonel laughed.

"What a charming little bully you are! I'm almost afraid of you."

She looked at him with a wicked flash in her eyes.

"Here," he said, extending his arm, his hand a few inches above the floor, "place one foot in my hand."

Miss did so.

"Now the other."

"What do you want to do?"

"Never mind—the other."

Carefully balancing herself, the young girl stood erect, supported on his hand. Then, without seeming effort, he raised her slowly almost to a level with his breast, held her there a moment, then lowered her to floor.

"You are pretty strong," she said, pleased with this magnificent exhibition of muscular power.

"Yes; and I'm as ugly as I'm strong."

Miss smiled.

"And you won't let me kill Mr. Gray?"

"No."

"How will you prevent me?"

"I will find a way."

"Don't me! I believe you would. But don't let us quarrel. To-morrow morning we leave Valparaiso."

"Where shall we go?"

"We'll join a pleasure party that is going on an excursion into the interior."

"How long shall we be gone?"

"Can't tell. You needn't be alarmed—there are ladies in the party."

"May I write to Mr. Gray?"

"Yes. I will tell you what to write. Get your pen, ink, and paper."

Miss got her writing materials, and seated herself at a table. The colonel stood by her shoulder.

"Write," he said: "Dear Mr. Gray: I received your letter, and am pleased to know you are all well. To-morrow I go on a trip to the interior, and do not expect to return for ten days. If I return in time, I will take the next steamer for Panama. I am well, happy, and contented. Give my love to Regina. Your little pupil—Lissy."

"I won't write that," said Miss.

"Very well—you need not. I'll write a note and sign it 'Colonel Wade.'"

"I won't leave the city, either."

"You will! If you don't go willingly, I'll have you put in a box, with holes bored in the top so that you may breathe, and send you as baggage."

Miss looked into the eyes of her master. They were implacable.

"You can do that," she said, tending her head.

"You are strong and I am weak."

"Listen, Lissy. You are safe with me—you are safe, because I know if I should make you mine against your will, you would revenge the wrong by killing yourself or me. You are the only girl I ever saw who could daunt me by such a threat; but I know what stuff you are made of. Yielding this, I yield no more. You may remain with me as you have—indulged, respected and beloved—or I will hold you by force."

"Very well," said the young girl; "I will go with you."

The next day Mr. Gray's agent was disappointed. Miss did not keep her appointment. He instituted inquiries, and soon obtained the information that Colonel Wade and lady had started with a government train on a trip across the continent to Buenos Ayres.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

Regina and Mr. Gray counted the days until they could expect to hear from Valparaiso. With the ordinary delays, it would take sixty days to go and return.

They put the spiritual telegraph in operation every week, but with no definite results.

One day Mr. Rhodes stepped into Mr. Gray's office.

"We got a little news from Valparaiso last night," he said.

"Indeed! By the usual process?"

"Yes—by telegraph."

"What is it?"

"Colonel Wade has left the city."

"With Miss?"

"Of course; he isn't the kind of man to leave her behind."

"Do you know on what day they left?"

"No; they don't appear to be very good on dates on the other side."

The conversation then turned to other topics. When Mr. Rhodes went out, a gentleman, who had overheard the conversation, approached Mr. Gray with a mystified air.

"Didn't that gentleman speak of getting news from Valparaiso by telegraph?" he asked.

"I believe so," responded Mr. Gray.

"Is the man crazy? There is no telegraph to Valparaiso."

"O! this is something new! If it works it will revolutionize the world."

"What is it?" demanded the gentleman. "Is there any money in it?"

"Millions of money—if it works. We are experimenting now."

"Experimenting? Formed a company? Any names for sale?"

"Haven't got so far as that yet. It is a telegraph without wires."

"That's just what is wanted. Wires are always breaking down. If you form a company I wish you would give me a show."

"I will. I am afraid, however, you won't approve of the principle."

"What is the principle?"

"Why, it's a kind of spiritual telegraph. Spirits are supposed to send messages concerning their friends."

"Spirits be d—d!" exclaimed the other. "What we want is to know the price of wheat in Valparaiso. Can they tell us that?"

"I dare say. The ghost of a wheat speculator would be likely to post you on the price of wheat."

"I see money in it," said the gentleman, excitedly. "Let us station a ghost at Valparaiso, another at Liverpool, another at Paris, another at Portland, and so on all over the world. Don't you see, with these secret means of information, we could coin money?"

"Perhaps—if the ghosts would organize themselves into a force for the especial purpose of gathering news;

but they seem more intent on giving us information about absent friends or their own condition in the other world."

"What do we care about the next world. What the great North American people want is to get the earliest news from different points in this world. If your spiritual telegraph will give us that, it will be a success—if it won't, shares won't be worth a d—n."

"I don't think shares are likely to be worth much," retorted Mr. Gray, and the two gentlemen parted.

In the following days the spiritual telegraph repeatedly reiterated the announcement that Colonel Wade and Miss had left Valparaiso, but were at a loss as to their proposed destination.

The telegraph asserted, however, that Mr. Forbes the agent of Mr. Gray, was returning on the steamer instead of following Colonel Wade, as Mr. Gray had directed, in the event the Colonel was not found in Valparaiso.

The steamer came in on time. An hour after, a little to Mr. Gray's surprise, Mr. Forbes entered his office.

"I bring you bad news," said the latter. "I have been foiled completely in the object of my mission."

"So I have been informed," said Mr. Gray.

"Informed! How, pray? I took the first steamer home, and traveled as fast as the mail."

"I was informed by telegraph," gravely replied Mr. Gray.

"By telegraph?—to Valparaiso?"

"A little private arrangement of my own. Now, give me the particulars about my ward."

Mr. Forbes related his interview with Miss, or with a girl he was led to believe was Miss. Expecting to meet her the next day, he had taken no means to ascertain that his chance acquaintance was in reality the girl he was seeking.

He also informed Mr. Gray that the character of Colonel Wade was not such as to inspire confidence in the purity of his relations with his young charge. What made it the more probable that he had been the young girl's victim, was the circumstance that, notorious as a man of pleasure, he had resisted, so far as known, the seductive blandishments of the demi-monde of Valparaiso.

It was apparent, also, that Miss had accompanied her protector willingly, even while knowing that means of escape were at hand.

Miss seemed lost, indeed. She was further away than ever, and flying from him of her own accord.

There was a little hope in the intelligence that the fugitives were journeying toward Buenos Ayres. That port might be reached in thirty days—twelve days to Havana, and eighteen from Havana to Buenos Ayres.

If Mr. Gray was not a man easily convinced, he certainly was not a man easily shaken in his faith. He believed in his little pupil. She might be made the victim of violence, but he felt that her soul could not be corrupted.

And if she had been betrayed, did she not need an avenger? If overwhelmed by fate, did she not need some friend to rescue her from dependency?

Somehow, his heart refused to believe that the worst had happened. Mr. Forbes said she looked tranquil and happy. If he knew Miss, tranquillity and happiness would depart with innocence.

Mr. Gray determined, therefore, at whatever sacrifice, to proceed at once to Buenos Ayres, and confront the villain who had stolen his ward.

Regina's noble nature shone out like pure gold. Her face paled a little when she heard Mr. Gray's purpose; but she said, without hesitation, "Go; Miss needs you."

Bob was summoned from Red Mountain. During Mr. Gray's absence Regina would need a protector.

The return mail brought from Bob a characteristic letter. It ran as follows:

DEAR SISTER:—Just got a letter from Mr. Gray, telling me that I am wanted at home. Been wanting to come home for two months, but don't see just how to get away. Truth is, little Clytie is the prettiest girl in Smith's Pocket, and I got a little sweet on her. Couldn't help it. That's the kind of fellow I am. Now, if you'll write to Clytie, and invite her to spend a few months with you, it'll be all right. Big brother'll go along to make sure it's all right. If you don't I'm afraid there'll be a row, and the boys up here are all crack shots. Your loving brother, BOB.

P. S.—I've written to Mr. Gray to give you half the money I got for that claim. So be good, now, and help a fellow out of a scrape. BOB.

Regina, a little frightened, showed the letter to Mr. Gray. "What shall I do with that wicked brother of mine?" she asked.

Mr. Gray was a little perplexed. He had a tolerable distinct recollection of Clytie's alluring glances, and he had not much faith in Bob's power of resistance. His acquaintance with hoodlum dialect did not furnish an exact definition of the phrase "a little sweet." Was it simply a flirtation, or was it a serious affair? The allusion to the chances of "a row" indicated the latter. The foolish girl might be compromised in the eyes of the austere moralists of Smith's Pocket, and yet not be lost past redemption. An invitation from Miss Shaw would set her right in that quarter, and could not seriously compromise Miss Shaw.

"I think you had better comply with your brother's request," he said; "Clytie is a little lady in appearance and manner, and if Bob is really attached to her, her presence in the city may have a wholesome restraint upon him."

Regina indited a friendly little letter to Clytie, expressing a desire to form the acquaintance of a young lady of whom she had heard so much from her brother, also from Miss and Mr. Gray, and concluding by inviting Miss Clytie and one of her brothers to visit her in the city.

In due time, an elegantly-written letter came from Clytie, thanking Miss Shaw for her expressions of friendliness, and also for her invitation, which was gratefully accepted.

Regina awaited the coming of her guests with some misgivings. She had not that implicit confidence in her brother's fine sense of propriety which would have justified pleasant anticipations from a visit of one of his lady friends. She thought of the night of Bob's farewell party and shuddered.

Being informed what day they might be expected, Mr. Gray and Regina rode to the boat to meet them. It was night, and Regina sat in the carriage while Mr. Gray went in search of the travelers. Mr. Gray had hardly disappeared when Bob came dashing through the crowd and into the carriage. He was the same Bob as of old, brown as a nut, but joyous, boisterous

restless. He kissed his sister a score of times, swore she was the best girl in the world, and that he was going to be worthy of such a sister in the future.

"But where is Miss Clytie?" asked Regina.

"O, Mr. Gray will take care of her. Thought I'd give him a chance. Isn't Gray a brick, though? Did the handsome thing about that claim."

"Yes," said Regina. "Mr. Gray has been very generous."

"Needn't blush, sis. Don't know how it'll come out between you and Miss, but I give my consent."

"Hush, Bob. Don't talk so."

The rush of passengers had ceased, and among the stragglers Regina recognized Mr. Gray with a lady on his arm, the two preceded by a stout youth of thirteen whom Regina had no difficulty in recognizing as the just Aristides.

"This young gentleman," said Bob, pulling the youth into the carriage, "is the best friend I had in Red Mountain."

Miss Shaw, though not greatly interested in boys of thirteen on general principles, gave her hand to the equitable youth and bade him welcome to San Francisco.

Miss Clytie's fair face now appeared at the carriage door. The two young ladies were formally introduced. Regina was charmed to see that her guest had at least the appearance of a lady. The sense of relief imparted a cordiality to her manner which made Clytie feel at home at once.

## CHAPTER XLIX.

## THE MEETING.

Mr. Gray had completed his preparations for a journey to Buenos Ayres, when a distracting item of intelligence came through the spiritual telegraph.

Colonel Wade and Miss had taken passage in the Sea Nymph for New York.

The lawyer was undecided what course to pursue. His confidence in the reliability of the spiritual telegraph as a medium of news was not yet fully established. While it had been correct in most of its statements, it had failed signally to give such particulars as seemed within its power to transmit, admitting that it had the source it claimed.

It was now October. The Sea Nymph, leaving Valparaiso in July, might weather Cape Horn and reach Buenos Ayres in three months. Colonel Wade and Miss, leaving Valparaiso two months later, might cross the continent in time to take passage as re-embarked.

The average direction of a voyage from San Francisco to New York was about one hundred and twenty days; but the Sea Nymph had been detained at Valparaiso several weeks, and its



passage round the Cape in the winter season might be almost indefinitely prolonged.

The spiritual telegraph had advised Mr. Gray to send an agent to Valparaiso instead of going himself; yet Mr. Gray felt confident that he could have rescued Miss had he been in Valparaiso in his agent's place. The spiritual telegraph, therefore, was not a safe adviser, however correct might be its intelligence.

If he should proceed direct to Buenos Ayres, and discover on his arrival that Colonel Wade and Miss had really sailed for New York, the time he would thus lose might prove fatal to the purpose of his mission.

If, on the other hand, he should go to New York, and Colonel Wade and Miss should not arrive as expected, he could then proceed to Buenos Ayres without great loss of time.

The latter course was finally adopted.

The last evening before his departure was spent, with Regina. Their association in the last three months had been intimate, but on a friendly basis. The prospect of a long separation opened their hearts to a sentiment each had resisted. At parting he drew her to his side, and bestowed, unchecked, almost the first caress he had ever offered.

"You will take care of yourself?" she whispered, as her cheek for a moment rested on his shoulder.

"Life has never seemed so sweet as at this moment," he replied. Looking into her beautiful eyes, he drew her closer to his side, bent and touched her lips, and hurried away.

The voyage was prosperous. In twenty-two days Mr. Gray was in New York. Upon inquiry he was informed that the Sea Nymph was daily expected.

He made arrangements to procure the earliest intelligence of her arrival, and waited with what patience he could command.

The third day after, the Sea Nymph was signalled. The solution of the mystery approached. He could not resist a feeling of awe as he reflected that he was acting under a direction that might be regarded as supernatural, and that events seemed to verify the correctness of the information he had so strangely received.

He hired a boat and was rowed out into the bay to meet the approaching vessel.

At last the boatmen pointed out the Sea Nymph, and, raising his glass, he discovered, among six or eight figures on the quarter-deck, one clad in a woman's garments.

The sea was smooth, and, as the bark was making but little headway, the boat easily came alongside.

A rope ladder suspended from the vessel's side enabled Mr. Gray to climb on deck, where he was met by an officer.

"I expect to find friends among your passengers," said Mr. Gray, in explanation of his visit.

"We have but four passengers," said the officer, courteously, "and you will find them on the quarter-deck."

The group was distant not more than twenty yards. The female figure he had observed was evidently that of a young girl. She was half-concealed by the form of a man, by whose side she was standing.

As she turned her head to speak to her companion, Mr. Gray caught a glimpse of her features.

It was Miss!

For a moment, cool and self-possessed as he was, he was overcome, and leaned against the railing for support.

In that moment the roving eyes of the young girl had caught sight of a stranger on board. Mr. Gray heard an exclamation, and saw a dark figure flying toward him. He turned and held out his arms, and caught the flying figure to his heart.

"O, Mr. Gray! dear Mr. Gray!" she murmured, between her kisses; "I knew you would come."

The young man pressed her close to his heart.

"Yes, darling," he answered; "I am here."

When Mr. Gray looked up he beheld a few feet distant a tall, powerful man, who stood regarding the scene with a menacing smile on his lips. The man advanced as he met Mr. Gray's eyes.

"Who is this gentleman?" he asked, addressing Miss.

The tone in which the question was asked recalled the young girl to her senses. Releasing herself from her guardian's arm, she answered, gravely:

"Mr. Gray."

"And this gentleman?" said Mr. Gray, retaining his hold on the arm of his ward.

"Colonel Wade."

Mr. Gray inclined his head in salutation.

There was a brief silence.

"Shall I thank Colonel Wade for his care of you, Miss?" asked Mr. Gray, at last.

"Yes," answered Miss, raising her frank, clear eyes to her guardian's face.

The young man's terrible fears vanished. He advanced a step toward Colonel Wade.

"Sir," he said, "this young lady is my ward. Allow me to thank you for the protection you have offered her in a strange land."

Colonel Wade was a man of the world. He saw—as he might have expressed it—that Mr. Gray held the winning hand. His knowledge of men restrained him from desperate measures when the chances were so much against him. The calm, resolute, yet courteous bearing of his adversary rather imposed upon him.

"This meeting is unexpected," he said, in a half-questioning tone, as if inclined to doubt Mr. Gray's being the person he was represented to be.

"But not undesired, I hope," replied Mr. Gray, politely.

"If I had been consulted," rejoined the colonel, "I should have preferred to place your ward in your charge to being waylaid in this manner."

"You will admit, however, that it was impossible to consult you."

"How did you know we were aboard the Sea Nymph?"

"I did not know you were aboard the Sea Nymph."

"But you had some reason to suppose we were?"

"Yes; I was so informed."

"By whom—by what means?"

"I might answer that the Sea Nymph left Valparaiso for Buenos Ayres in June—that you and my ward left Valparaiso by the overland route about two months later, and the conclusion was rational that you

would arrive in Buenos Ayres about the same time the Sea Nymph would arrive in that port. Admitting the correctness of this supposition so far, it was not a great stretch of the powers of divination to suppose you might take passage on the Sea Nymph for New York."

"It is impossible to contend against a man who makes such elaborate calculations as these, and draws from them correct conclusions."

Mr. Gray bowed. He now felt secure. He held his ward by the hand, and in his pocket were proofs of his legal right to assert his claim to guardianship.

The colonel turned upon Miss a regard, in which was expressed the love of his passionate heart. It was a mute and eloquent appeal, but it failed in effect. He bowed coldly, turned upon his heel, and walked away.

The guardian and ward were alone. There was so much to say that they said nothing. Holding his hand between hers, she stood silently watching the mighty city toward which they were slowly drifting.

## CHAPTER L.

### BOB'S LAST FIGHT.

The careful reader may perhaps remember that our latest intelligence of Miss Hattie Brooks was of an unsatisfactory character. She was, in fact, represented in that condition of mind which ardent and volatile natures are subject to in the absence of the person of the opposite sex whom they have honored with their regard.

Miss Brooks would doubtless have remained faithful to Bob Shaw, if Bob Shaw had remained by her side to assist in the difficult but noble work of being faithful. But Bob Shaw was at Red Mountain and Miss Brooks was in San Francisco. Bob Shaw's occasional letters were a great comfort, but far less powerful supporters of good resolutions than Bob Shaw's presence would have been.

The enemy of mankind is said to be a personage of great perspicacity in the matter of opportunity. He attacks most vigorously when the object of his attack is least prepared for defense.

The enemy appeared to Miss Brooks in the form of a young man. He appeared in the form of a young man precisely when the maiden was vehemently lamenting the absence of another young man to whom she had given as much of her heart as her nature would permit her to part with.

The enemy, therefore, choosing this implement of attack, and selecting his opportunity with so much address, enjoyed an easy victory. Long before Bob Shaw returned from Red Mountain, the lively young lady had given another the right to fight her battles.

In good time—or in bad time, as the case might be

—Bob Shaw returned to San Francisco. His return created quite a commotion in the free-and-easy club, and the members looked forward to stirring times. Bob was not the boy to put up with any interference with his rights, and the conviction was universal that Bob would make it very lively for his successful rival.

This successful rival was a young man who had seen life in its roughest phases. He had been a soldier under Stonewall Jackson, and had his scars to show for it. His name was Benjamin Root. He stood five feet eleven inches in his stockings, and six feet one in his boots. His figure certainly was not symmetrical, but it presented points that could not fail to strike the eye of one accustomed to estimate physical strength by the human form.

To do Miss Brooks justice, we must say that she was not ambitious of playing the role of Helen. When she heard that Bob had returned, she proposed to her new admirer a compromise. She would return to her allegiance and assume the responsibility of the little infidelity which threatened such serious results.

Mr. Benjamin Root—or Ben Root, as he was familiarly called—would not hear to this compromise. He had his own ideas of honor—ideas which did not permit him to retreat in the face of an enemy. He commanded Miss Brooks to remain faithful to her present relations, and let Bob Shaw and himself settle the little difficulty in their own way.

The etiquette of these circles compelled Miss Brooks to acquiesce. She would not be justified by her associates in "shaking" her admirer until he had failed to demonstrate his ability to defend himself from the attack of his rival.

Bob's first interview with his old associates caused much surprise. He was as frank and hearty as ever, but he didn't seem the least offended at Miss Brooks's inconstancy. He first met her in company with a number of their mutual friends, and, with the impartiality of a truly noble nature, kissed all the girls, including Miss Brooks. Then he turned carelessly, and, recognizing Mr. Root, nodded pleasantly and held out his hand. And there, in the presence of at least a dozen members of the free-and-easy club, the rivals stood and talked as pleasantly as if there had been no cause of quarrel between them.

The free-and-easy club was terribly scandalized. Their leader had not shown his accustomed spirit. No one dared to intimate that Bob Shaw was afraid, but he was certainly less impetuous than formerly. The air of Red Mountain evidently had not agreed with him.

Miss Brooks was chagrined. Bob's acceptance of the situation not only wounded her pride, but it wounded that other part of herself which from the force of custom she called her affections. If she loved Ben Root at hand better than she loved Bob Shaw at a distance, her love quickly returned to the latter when the matter of distances was equalized.

But Bob remained unconscious of the criticisms which were being freely passed upon his conduct. He was liberally supplied with money, and he scattered it with a free hand. Entertainment after entertainment was gotten up at his expense, but he neither made love to Hattie Brooks nor quarrelled with Hattie Brooks's admirer.

Ben Root rather puffed himself on Bob's forbearance. He intimated to his companions that the secret of that forbearance lay in his own reputation as a "fighting man." He intimated, moreover, an intimation to drive Bob to the wall—to make him fight or admit a disqualification to engage a man of Mr. Root's prowess and reputation.

When Bob was told of this boast he laughed pleasantly. His companions, however, thought they saw mischief in his eye. Bob had always had on ugly habit of laughing when he had a serious affair on his hands, but his laugh could not be relied on as an evidence of true amiability of disposition. The boys, therefore, came to the conclusion that on some fine day Bob would redeem his reputation.

The fine day came. The Free-and-Easy Social Club gave their quarterly social about a month after Bob's return to the city. Bob could not well decide to attend, and the etiquette of the club would not permit him to attend without escorting a lady. It Bob invited Miss Brooks matters between him and Mr. Root would be brought to a speedy issue. If he did not invite Miss Brooks he would abandon all pretensions to that lady.

The club were in a high state of excitement. The ladies discussed the chances with as much interest as the gentlemen. The opinion was universal that Bob would invite Miss Brooks, and that the young lady would accept the invitation.

The eventful evening came. The company assembled early. The first sensation was the appearance of Miss Brooks with Mr. Root. The second and greater sensation was the appearance of Bob Shaw with an exceedingly pretty young girl, who was known to but few of the members of the club. She was very young, very pretty, very bright, and as audacious as pretty as California girls usually are.

It was her first ball. She had awakened one morning recently and found herself a woman. She was impatient for all the pleasures to which in her new estate she seemed to be heir. She appreciated the ecstasies attending her debut. The circumstances suited her disposition. She knew that every eye was upon her, but she had eyes only for her handsome escort.

Bob was in high spirits. He seemed unconscious of having forfeited his claim to the respect of his fellow members by his surrender of his former queen to a rival.

Miss Brooks would have borne his desertion with some show of equanimity. If he had substituted in her place a passably pretty girl; but Miss Ella Clark, though only fifteen, was the belle of the ball-room. She was also the best dancer in an assembly of ladies who prided themselves on their proficiency in this accomplishment. She was something of a flirt, also; despite her attentions to her escort, she continued to be surrounded by half the young gentlemen in the room. Miss Brooks, usually the belle, was almost neglected. What she suffered that night no one but a woman can know. The first impulse of her weak heart was to be angry, and she passed Bob with a freezing bow. Bob returned the bow with a nod, and actually went on with his nonsense as if nothing had happened.

Late in the evening she found an opportunity to seize upon the disingenuous for a promenade. Aban-

doning the angry dodge as one not likely to be productive of pleasing results, she became a suppliant.

"Bob," she said, "you will break my heart."

"Break what?"

"My heart! I can't bear this!"

"Come, come, Hattie! I don't get spinnin' in your old age. You're a nice girl, but a shade too fickle. You know you always had a leaning that way."

"Eh, I never cared for a man but you."

"Well, I can't say as to that. Rootie wouldn't like to hear you talk that way, I reckon."

"I don't care for Mr. Root!—you know very well I don't!"

"That's between you and him. Don't count me in."

"Bob."

"Well."

"Will you forgive me?"

"Nothing to forgive. A girl belongs to herself till she gets a husband."

"But we used to be such good friends."

"True—we stuck together a long time. Always did the right thing by you until you sho' k me."

"But I didn't mean to. Bob—you know I didn't."

"Don't know—looked like it."

"Well," she continued, pressing his arm, "if you say so, I will never speak to Root again."

"Can't encourage you in this whole-ale shakin' business. Bitter stick to Rootie, now you've got him."

Miss Brooks comprehended that she had attacked clumsily, and was humiliating herself without producing an impression upon the object of her affections. Perhaps it was this feeling of mortification—perhaps the effects of a real disappointment—that caused her, as she passed the door of the ladies' retiring room, to leave Bob's side suddenly, cover her face with her hands, and dart through the doorway. When her friends gathered round her, a moment later, she was weeping bitterly—too bitterly, in fact, to tell what was the matter.

The girls could only attribute her tears to one cause. That cause was Bob. In the flush of resentment the loyalty of the sex to each other rose superior to reason. No one asked what Bob had said or done, but the rumor went round that the maiden had been insulted.

The rumor reached the ears of Mr. Root. Mr. Root went in search of the offender. Bob's fault was not that of shirking a responsibility, and he readily permitted himself to be found. Those who had thought that he shrank from an encounter with his rival, were speedily undeceived. His handsome face wore that serene smile which was never so expressive as when about to engage in a personal conflict.

"Well, Rootie," he said, "some of the boys said you was looking for me."

"Mr. Shaw," replied the other, "you've insulted a lady who is under my protection."

"That's a lie!" returned Bob; "but if it will answer your purpose, just consider it true."

Bob's readiness to accept the situation delighted his friends. Mr. Root, pale with anger, began to prepare for an immediate combat.

"Keep cool," said Bob. "We have ladies to take care of, and the chances are that, after our little settle-

ment, one of us won't be in a very good condition to serve as a lady's escort. Let us wait till daylight. There's a nice place not far off, which all the boys know as the vacant corner. I'll be there at daybreak."

So reasonable a position could but commend itself to the intelligent minds to whom it was addressed. Mr. Root was admonished, in the classical language of the club, to restrain his impatience.

"There's no danger about Bob," said one; "he'll be there. If anybody's missing, it will be the other fellow."

The club reasoned that a combat, preceded by certain preliminaries, would be regarded as a greater event than a combat entered upon the spur of the moment. So Mr. Root was compelled perforce to repress the ardor which prompted him to avenge an insult upon a lady who did him the honor to accept his protection.

The call continued until late in the morning. The coming fight was the topic of the evening. Ladies openly regretted that an absurd public opinion would not permit them to be witnesses to the affair. Bob was a favorite, both in a sentimental point of view and as subject for a wager. He had the cleanest record of any fellow in the club. He had never been whipped, and the girls bet heaps of candy that he would "get away" with his stalwart antagonist.

The young ladies were escorted home at last, and parted from their escorts with the injunction to bring the earliest news from the field of battle. Bob was a thing no one thought of under such exciting circumstances.

In the gray of dawn about a hundred young fellows assembled at the vacant corner. The "corner" comprised a quarter of a block. There were dwelling houses in the distance, but the adjacent buildings were otherwise occupied. Isolated as it was, with a clean turf, it was a favorite resort for the boys when any serious affair was on hand.

In selecting early dawn as the time for the meeting, Bob had severely tested his own and his antagonist's nerve. A man who will fight at five in the morning must be influenced by a very pressing consideration. It is an hour when bed seems particularly inviting. The blood runs low, and the craven in a man's nature takes that time to urge its scruples. The grayish hue that pervades earth and sky protests against the sight of crimson blood.

But Bob had never approached combat with so desperate a purpose. He resented the conduct of Root—not in winning Miss Brooks's affections, but in parading his seeming success. He was glad to be released from any entangling alliance with that young lady, but he did not like the manner in which Mr. Root had volunteered his assistance.

The ring was formed, seconds chosen, and the word given. Root had the advantage of weight and height; Bob of superior science and activity. The contest was fierce, desperate and prolonged. The time came when Bob'sadroitness gave him an advantage he had never lost. He held the issue in his own hands, punished his antagonist at his pleasure, and at last laid him insensible with a terrible blow which would have felled an ox.

Somewhat battered and disfigured, Bob returned to

town and rung up a physician, who had been rung up on similar occasions before. A crowd of his enthusiastic friends accompanied him, but at the physician's door he bade them good-by. The door closed between him and his "hoodlum" associates, and he left the old life behind forever. He could now withdraw with honor, according to the "hoodlum" code.

## CHAPTER LI.

### CONSPIRACY.

The reader may imagine with what impatience Miss Shaw awaited intelligence from Mr. Gray. She had more faith than he in the spiritual telegraph as a means of transmitting intelligence, and this faith she kept alive by frequent visits to Mrs. Rhodes. But at times reason and the influences of early education asserted their power over her mind. The whole theory of communicating by spiritual telegraph seemed so strange, so utterly unaccountable, so utterly at variance with the principles of physical law as they had been understood and interpreted by the master minds of the world, that she could hardly believe its pretended intelligence would be verified by facts.

Mr. Gray was scarcely out of sight when Mr. Hopp appeared at her side. Mr. Hopp was more persistent and determined than ever. He urged his suit now with her mother's full sanction. He was supported by Dr. Fox, who, in the character of a worldly spiritual adviser, hunted at the desirability of a settlement in life on such a basis as Mr. Hopp could offer. He also spoke of the peculiarity of Regina's relation to Mr. Gray—of the frail nature of her resources and the impropriety of her accepting from a comparative stranger pecuniary aid.

"Mr. Gray extends us no aid," she had replied warmly. "In his judgment one half of the profits of the business are as much ours as if papa were alive. I am sure he does not think he is placing us under the slightest obligation."

"Perhaps he does not think so, but others do."

"Who can understand this better than Mr. Gray and ourselves?"

"No one," of course. But you look at it from one standpoint—the world from another."

"The world! What does the world say?"

"That such acts of disinterested generosity are very rare in young men of this age."

"Is that a reason why we should believe in them?"

"My dear Miss Shaw, the first object of a young lady should be to preserve her entire independence. She cannot accept even friendly assistance from a young gentleman without compromising her reputation."

A flush stole into Regina's cheek.

"Pardon me if I speak plainly," resumed Dr. Fox.

"I have ventured to speak with you on this subject at the request of your mother."

"Do you advise me to accept Mr. Hopp's offer of marriage?"

"Most assuredly I do."

"But I do not love Mr. Hopp. I am not sure that I do not dislike him."

"Love, my dear young lady, is a sentiment upon which young ladies are apt to place too much value. A girl often thinks she loves a man of whom she knows nothing, and who is unworthy of her lightest regard. A woman should select a good man for a husband, and if her heart is pure and her mind properly disciplined, she will learn to love him. In this instance it is your duty as a Christian to consider your mother's wishes. She does not see Mr. Gray with your eyes. His relations to that unfortunate girl—Miss, the mystery that surrounds her death, the doubt if Mr. Gray was not the cause of it, all serve to awaken a mother's apprehensions."

Regina listened in silence. She knew more than she could tell.

"Mr. Hopp," pursued the clergyman, "is in every respect a desirable match. Still young, as men view men—he has achieved a fine position. If not a really rich man, he has a reputation in his profession that is better than money."

"Pardon me," said the young lady; "is the circumstance of Mr. Hopp's being a successful lawyer any reason why I should accept him as a husband?"

"Not, perhaps, in itself, but the man is unobjectionable and has loved you for years."

"Then you really advise me to accept him."

"I certainly do. It will make your mother happy."

"Well," answered the young lady; "I'll think of it." Dr. Fox took his departure.

"Miss was right," murmured Regina. "Dr. Fox is a meddling old fool, but I am not brave enough to tell him so."

Thus was one of many conversations on the same subject. There were Mr. Hopp himself, Dr. Fox, and her mother—all urging the same suit.

When Mr. Gray had been absent twenty-five days, Miss Shaw received a telegram from him announcing his arrival in New York.

The next day she received another dispatch stating that the Sea Nymph was daily expected.

Three days later she received a third dispatch, in which Mr. Gray simply said, "Miss is with me."

On the same afternoon, Bob, who had been absent nearly a week, made his appearance with some suspicious marks on his face resembling those which Regina had seen before.

"O, Bob!" she exclaimed, reproachfully, "you've been fighting again."

Bob gravely led his sister into her room and threw himself into an easy chair.

"Did I ever promise you to give up my wild way and be a man?"

"No; but I wish you would."

"Well, I promise you now. I've had my last fight. Going to shake the whole crowd."

"Miss Brooks and all?"

"Miss Brooks has shaken me. Set the trap and she fell into it. Had to fight the new fellow just to show

that I wasn't afraid, but I took care to stand on solid ground. It's all over, and I'm going to be a man."

"O, Bob, I'm so glad."

"Heard from Gray yet?"

Regina showed him the first two telegrams.

"What makes Gray think Miss is aboard the Sea Nymph?"

"He heard she was through the same source from which he received information of her being at Valparaiso."

"This is all a mystery to me. If she went to Buenos Ayres, how could Gray know she had taken passage for New York?"

"If you'll come with me to-night I'll tell you all I know."

"Of course I'll go with you. I'll go everywhere with you if you'll send Hopp about his business."

"Would you like to have me marry Mr. Hopp?"

"Marry Mr. Hopp? If you do I'll disown you."

"Matrimony wants I should. You know we are poor."

"Not so very poor. We've got nearly four thousand dollars between us, and the office makes heaps of coin."

"True; but four thousand dollars is very little to live on, and we don't know how long the office will coin money for us."

"It will make money for us as long as it makes money for Mr. Gray. I'm going in with him."

Regina laughed.

"You a lawyer!" she said.

"Needn't laugh. There's lots of outside work to do; kind of detective business, that will suit me to a dot. Gray and I have talked it over."

"Have you?—indeed!"

"Yes; he wants me to come in. Didn't say so, but I've an idea he thought you'd feel more content if our family was represented in the firm."

"That's like Mr. Gray."

"Tell you what, Regie, Gray's a good fellow. Just see how he's stuck to Miss."

"Yes," assented Regina, "he's been a good friend to Miss."

"And now if he finds her and brings her back—"

"Well, if he finds her, of course he will bring her back."

"Come, Regie, sit down by me and open your heart."

Regina seated herself on a stool by her brother's knee and waited for him to question her.

"Would you like to have Gray marry Miss?" he asked.

"If he wants to."

"Would you like to have him want to?"

"I don't know."

"That's a fib, Regie; you do know."

"Well, I shall not tell you."

"Needn't. I understand all about it now. You and I can work together like two mules."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I don't want Mr. Gray to marry Miss more than you do."

"But I don't care whom Mr. Gray marries."

"What a fraud you girls are. Why don't you own up like a man?"

"Because I am not a man."

"Well answered, little girl. You can't let any one know you like Mr. Gray until Mr. Gray tells you he likes you. That's what you get for being a woman."

Now, I don't hesitate to say that if Miss comes back I am going for her."

"You mean—"

"I mean I am going for her. The fever's been growing on me ever since I left here last spring. Miss is the only girl in the world that just fills the bill."

"But Miss thinks too much of Mr. Gray to think of any one else."

"Brother and sister—just like you and me. I've always loved you better than all the other girls put together, but I wouldn't marry you if you wasn't my sister. Think I love you too well."

"I hope you do."

"Fact is, you've been a good sister to me, and I've been a bad brother to you. You've never turned against me when I was cutting up and disgracing the family. You never let any one think you were ashamed to own me for your brother."

"That's true, Bob; I've always felt as if some day I should be proud of you."

"So you shall, Regie. But don't let us get away from the case under consideration, as the lawyers say. I want to propose an alliance offensive and defensive."

"How fearfully legal you are. What do you mean?"

"I mean that you've got a man on your hands that you don't want, and I am in about the same fix, only it isn't a man."

"Ah!" exclaimed Regina. "Clytie!"

"The fact is, Regie, up in Red Mountain Clytie was the prettiest girl in sight. Of course, I made love to her. Couldn't help it. She's a dear little girl, and would make some other man a mighty nice wife."

Regina laughed.

"You are willing then to recommend her to—"

"To Mr. Hopp. She's just the girl for him."

"But, Bob—"

"The thing can be managed. You've seen the play called 'Much Ado About Nothing.' You know how the hoodlums came it over Beatrice and Benedick."

"Yes; I understand."

"Now we'll play the same game with some little variations. I'll pretend to be jealous of Mr. Hopp, and you must contrive to intimate that Mr. Hopp is fond of Clytie. Then we'll manage to throw Clytie and Hopp together as much as we can, and then caution Mr. Hopp not to take advantage of Miss Morpher's evident preference for himself. The man never had a woman in love with him in his life, and he'll jump at the game. Bet fifty dollars to one that we make a match of it."

"I'll take the bet, and try to lose," cried Regina, laughing. "What a head you have, Bob!"

"Pretty good. If the brain had not been of good quality, it would have been pounded into a jelly long ago. But neither you nor I have a right to be a fool with such a father as we had."

"That's true, Bob. Dear papa! if he was only alive I should be perfectly happy."

"The old gentleman went a rather rapid pace. Could keep up his lick, and couldn't stop. The time

came when he was like that stage-driver—on a down grade, and couldn't reach the brake."

"But he was the best man that ever lived, for all that."

"Had a good heart. After all, that is the main thing. Give me a fellow with a good heart, and I don't mind if he cuts up a little rough at times. But about our comedy. You agree to play the part of Hero?"

"O, yes. It will be glorious fun. And if you should succeed—"

"You'll lose a beau that isn't worthy of you, and I a girl that I am not worthy of. So you see the interests of justice will be served."

"In a somewhat indirect way."

"What would you have? We cannot always accomplish our purposes in a straightforward manner. But we are doing the parties service. You are not going to marry Mr. Hopp, and I am not going to marry Clytie. Now, as Mr. Hopp wants a wife and Clytie wants a husband—why not make them think they want each other?"

"I really begin to think we are doing them a service instead of ourselves."

"Of course we are. Isn't it better to give one girl a husband than to take one from another?"

"I believe Mr. Hopp would suit her better than you."

"I am very sure she would suit Mr. Hopp better than she would suit me. I want a girl with a dash pepper in her composition."

"You'll get pepper enough if you ever get Miss. But she is the bravest and truest-hearted girl I ever knew."

"She's a brick. Thought so when I first saw her, poor little thing, dancing on the hill all by herself. But what are you going to do with me this evening?"

"Take you to call on some friends of mine."

"Making calls isn't much in my line, but I'll go if you want me to."

"I do want you to. Perhaps we may get news from Miss."

"Then I'll go anyhow. Good-bye. I'll be back at dinner."

"Good-bye. You may tell Mr. Hopp to come, if you like, and then we'll leave him and Clytie to amuse each other."

"Good! That's the first scene. We'll see if we can't make them dance to our music."

## CHAPTER LII.

### BOB RECEIVES NEWS.

Miss Clytie Morpher found her visit at the city very pleasant. Though Regina did not exactly go into society, she was much sought by gentlemen. In the evening her parlor was seldom vacant. Clytie's sweet beauty caused Clytie to be very popular. She was brilliant in conversation, but she could make silence very agreeable. She had a trick of talking with her eyes, which often stands pretty young girls in lieu of oral conversation. Nature had given her

the disposition to be a coquette, but had withheld the dash and sparkle that usually enter into the composition of that variety of girl. By no means heartless, she was saved from great heart troubles by the facility with which one image was effaced by another. She would mourn the loss of a lover only in case the loss was not supplied.

Clytie had sincerely loved Bob while Bob was her daily companion at Red Mountain. She had come to the city to visit Bob's sister, in the sweet hope of becoming Bob's wife; but, once in town, she found herself surrounded by handsome gentlemen who were far more attentive and deferential than Bob. Her sensuous but not impure nature responded very quickly to overtures which seemed prompted by love. She wanted to be loved—not by one only, but by all who approached her. So each by turn was greeted with her soft, shy and melting glances, and each thought himself the particular object of her regard.

Clytie, therefore, was having a fine time. Bob's occasional absence did not cause her much anxiety. In time Bob ceased to occupy a prominent place in her thoughts. His reticence on the important question of marriage assisted her recovery from the wounds his persuasive tongue had inflicted. The admiration with which she inspired other gentlemen suggested the idea that she was not entirely dependent on Bob for a settlement in life.

The comedy which the artful Bob proposed to play, and which Regina promised to aid, almost played itself. An intimation from Regina that Mr. Hopp was not insensible to her charms, disposed the unsophisticated girl to be more than usually gracious. Mr. Hopp was not a favorite with the ladies, and this graciousness on the part of one so pretty and so much admired was soothing to his feelings.

The evening after the conversation recorded in the last chapter, Clytie was left to entertain Mr. Hopp, while Regina and Bob paid Mr. and Mrs. Rhodes a visit. The visit was an experiment on Regina's part. She carried in her pocket the telegram from Mr. Gray containing simply these words: "Miss is with me." This intelligence she had with great effort kept to herself. She desired to know if the table, or the intelligence that communicated through it, would impart the same information.

Bob was presented in due form, and graciously received. A pleasant conversation on ordinary topics ensued, when Mrs. Rhodes asked Regina if she desired sitting. The young lady, of course, assented.

"Do you believe in ghosts, Mr. Baw?" asked Mrs. Rhodes.

"No," replied Bob; "of course I don't."

"Well," replied the lady, "Regina and I have an appointment with one this evening; but if you don't like their company, you and Mr. Rhodes can smoke a cigar in another room while our conference lasts."

"I see," said Bob; "you want to get rid of us. Lead the way, Captain."

"Don't go unless you choose," replied Mrs. Rhodes. "We have no secrets."

"But you don't mean to say that you are going to interview a ghost?"

"That is precisely what we propose to do."

"Well, if Regina stays, I guess I will. What do you say, Captain?"

"With Miss Shaw's permission, I will stay where she is."

The room was darkened. Bob did not understand what it all meant; but he thought he could stand it if others could, and so said nothing.

"They are here in force," said Mrs. Rhodes. "They must have some news to communicate."

"Who are here?" asked Bob.

"The spirits."

"Ah!" said Bob, "I see spirits are your favorite joke."

"Listen, Bob," said Regina, clinging to his arm.

At this moment Mrs. Rhodes read slowly:

"How-is-my-little-princess-to-night?"

"Very well, thank you," answered Regina.

"Well!" said Bob, "that's odd! The Governor used to call you 'Little Princess.'"

"Who-do-you-mean-by-the-Governor?" Mrs. Rhodes asked, reading from the table.

"I mean my respected sire," answered Bob, replying, as he supposed, to Mrs. Rhodes.

"Well," came the answer, "I am your respected sire."

Bob laughed. He was evidently not much impressed by ghostly influences.

"I've no objections to taking you for a sister—if the captain is willing," he replied; "but I don't think you'd make an efficient father."

"Hush, Bob!" remonstrated Regina. "You don't know who you are talking to."

Mrs. Rhodes continued reading from the table.

"Robert, do you remember the little affair you had with a pretty school-mistress, about six years ago?"

"Let me see," said Bob. "That is a long time to remember a little affair of that nature."

"I will refresh your recollection. You were kept after school one afternoon."

"Yes," said Bob; "a good many afternoons."

"One afternoon in particular. On this occasion, instead of studying your lessons, as you were doubtless expected to, you made violent love to the school-teacher."

"Perhaps," replied Bob. "I don't remember the circumstance."

"The school-teacher did not like to go to her principal with such a complaint, and she could not let it pass in silence, so she took an early opportunity to call on your respected sire."

"Well," said Bob; "what then?"

"Your respected sire summoned you to a private interview. In the course of that interview you became convinced of the impropriety of your conduct, and the next day you asked the teacher's pardon."

"Madam!" said Bob, addressing Mrs. Rhodes, "if this joke pleases you, I can stand it; but I would like to know how you know so much about my little affairs?"

"I know nothing about your little affairs," answered Mrs. Rhodes. "I only read what is written on the table."

"But, Madam, there is nothing written on the table."

"Pardon me; I see letters, and the letters form words. As fast as a word appears I read it, and it gives place to another."

"This is very strange. Regie, can you see these letters?"

"No; but I believe Mrs. Rhodes does."

"But who writes them?"

"Why, the spirits, of course."

"Very well. I see you are amusing yourselves at my expense. Go on; I can stand a joke. I'd like to know, though, who told the spirits about that little school-teacher?"

"Who could tell them?"

"No one but the little school-teacher herself, or our respected sire."

Mrs. Rhodes then continued:

"Some of these days, my son, I will convince you who it is that speaks to you. To-night we have other business to attend to. Regie, I have news for you."

"From Miss?"

"Yes. Have you revealed to any one the purport of your last telegram from Mr. Gray?"

"Not to a human being."

"You know, though, that Mr. Gray has found Miss?"

"I know he has."

"Hold a minute," cried Bob. "I'm a little interested in this. What is it about Mr. Gray's finding Miss?"

"You heard what Mrs. Rhodes read."

"Yes; but I'll be d—d if I understand it."

"Well," explained Mr. Rhodes, "the point of it is this. We have a spiritual telegraph, which keeps us posted in affairs that interest us in all quarters of the globe. We are interested in your friend Miss, through our sister and Mr. Gray. Now, Mr. Gray seems to have found Miss, and our spiritual telegraph naturally informs us of the circumstance."

"I think I'd like to own an interest in this spiritual telegraph," said Bob. "But is it true, sis, that Mr. Gray has found Miss?"

"I received a telegram from him to-day, in which he says he has."

"And the spiritual telegraph says so, too? Madam, I'm a convert. This is the best news I've heard in twenty odd years. So Miss is alive, after all. By Jove! I wish you would send me to New York by spiritual telegraph! Madam, you've no idea what a splendid girl she is! She is a regular brick. She is a girl you can bet on and win every time!"

"O," exclaimed Regina, "I've heard you talk in the same strain before."

"If you have it was when I was a raw and inexperienced youth. Now I speak from mature conviction. But let us have a little more talk through that machine. Can't we manage to speak to Miss, and let her know we are here?"

"To do so we would need a machine at the other end."

"That's true," said Bob; "at least, I suppose it is. Madam," he continued, addressing Mrs. Rhodes, "wouldn't one of these accommodating spirits take a trip to New York and see how the little girl is?"

"We know Miss is well. She will be with you in less than a month."

"A month! That's a long time. What a lucky fellow Gray is! He's always on hand at the right time." Bob plied the spirits with a thousand questions, which need not be repeated. It was quite late when they set out on their return home.

Meantime the correct Clytie had been left to herself. Regina and Bob had set out early, leaving their guest to entertain Mr. Hopp, and others who might chance to call. For an hour or more her sole companion was Aristides. Clytie experienced a wistful affection for the just youth, but his ordinary conversation was not of a character to amuse her. He talked of boys and boys' sports. His companions were wonderfully precocious lads with queer names, and he felt it his duty to tell Clytie all about them. There is doubtless a period when girls are interested in boys. This period terminates abruptly when they become interested in men. Clytie, as has been remarked, at an earlier stage in this history was an early bloomer. For some years her heroes had worn beards. The boy fever had a quick run and a complete cure. She dimly recognized the necessity of having boys, in view of the greater necessity of having men; but, at present, boyish exploits had ceased to interest her. Aristides, incapable of comprehending this condition of the feminine mind, only arrested his sister's attention so far as to cause her to wonder, at times, what he was talking about.

About half-past eight the door-bell rang. Clytie abruptly left the eloquent Aristides in the midst of a thrilling narrative of adventure, and ran to the door.

"O, Mr. Hopp!" she said, with an impulsiveness rare in her, "I am so glad you are come. Regina and her brother have gone out and left me alone."

Somehow she gave him two hands instead of one, and blushed when she discovered she had done so. The act, certainly, was unpremeditated. So young and so inexperienced, she could hardly know that she possessed two of those soft, yf-ling, magnetic hands that the staidest men like to hold.

"It isn't often," said Mr. Hopp, "that Robert Shaw does anything I can thoroughly approve of, but to-night is an exception."

"But Miss Regina is gone to."

"Miss Regina knows how to compensate for her absence."

Miss Clytie was helping Mr. Hopp take off his overcoat, banging his hat on the rack, and performing other little services by which girls make themselves indispensable without being in the least degree useful. She blushed a little at his implied compliment, glanced shyly up to his face, and seemed as innocently pleased to be with him as if they were already in that fatal declivity which so often ends in the dead-level of matrimony.

The young lady certainly had no designs on Hopp. She still considered herself in a fair way to be engaged some day to Bob; but it had been intimated that Mr. Hopp was particularly pleased with her, and he was a man of sufficient note to be a desirable addition to her circle of admirers. And then she knew that there was talk of a marriage between him and Regina, and she had not strength of mind enough to forego a flirtation with a friend's intended.

Mr. Hopp was precisely in the condition of mind to fall a victim to a shy attack. He had seen too much of the world to fall into the meshes of an ordinary adventuress, however brilliant she might be; but this charming little mountain girl could not be dangerous. It was pleasant, however, to be made so much of—to feel that his presence conferred pleasure—to find himself preferred to another. He did not waver in his purpose to make Regina his wife; but, meantime, while Regina was making up her mind to accept her fate, he might as well enjoy the pleasures Heaven sent in his way.

They adjourned to the parlor. Aristides understood that his hour was past, and took himself off. The curtain rose on the first act of the comedy.

Clytie wheeled an easy chair before the fire and placed her own at a little distance.

"Do you expect other callers?" asked Mr. Hopp.

"Not to-night. You are very late yourself. I began to think you would not come."

Miss Clytie was doing pretty for a novice. The remark was not brilliant in an intellectual point of view, but it pleased Mr. Hopp much better than any reply Madame de Stael would probably have given under the like circumstances.

"I dare say," he replied, "there would be a thousand here if they knew you wanted them to come."

"But I don't want any one to come. The gentlemen all come to see Miss Shaw, and she is a way."

Mr. Hopp's penetrating eyes turned upon the pretty face and graceful form at his side.

"Here," he said to himself, "is a sweet and modest little girl who has not been spoiled by flattery. She will never trouble her husband with her ideas. She will have no mission but to make her husband happy. She wouldn't know what to do with a vote if one should be placed in her hand. She is such a helpless, simple creature that she ought to have a husband older than herself, and wise enough to tell her just what she ought to do. She won't want to shine in society, as Regina does, nor attend conventions as some of my lady friends do. She will make the right man a nice wife."

Mr. Hopp did not come to the conclusion at that moment that he was the right man. He had still hopes of Regina, and it was his habit never to abandon a suit until it was lost. He was pleased with Clytie, and was pleased that Clytie had looked forward to his coming.

They talked on common-place subjects, and when they gave out, Miss Clytie challenged her companion to a game of backgammon. She was not a very skillful player, but she handled the dice-boxes gracefully, and

had observed that this play afforded an opportunity to make the most of a pair of handsome hands. These hands must have confused the lawyer sadly, for Miss Clytie, badly as she played, won almost every game. The pretty hand perhaps suggested the propriety of gloves on occasion, and when Regina and Bob came home, Clytie had won gloves enough to last her all winter.

"I see," said Regina, coming up to Clytie. "I cannot flatter myself that my absence has been regretted."

"My dear Regina," replied Mr. Hopp, with familiarity often assumed by a very old friend of the family, "if you wish me to regret your absence, you must not give me cause so often."

"Hopp's rather got you, Regie," said Bob, taking his place at Clytie's shoulder and stily playing with a card that dangled on her white neck. "Double-sixes by Jove! Just what you wanted to win the game."

"I believe," said Mr. Hopp, good-humoredly, "that Miss Clytie has double-sixes at her command. All I have won this evening is the honor of supplying her with gloves for some months to come."

"It was your proposition, Mr. Hopp; I didn't want to play for gloves."

"I know you did not. I had an absurd idea that I might win something from you, and am punished for my folly."

"Clytie will give you another chance," said Bob. "There's nothing mean about her."

Mr. Hopp signified his intention to take the chance if it was offered him, and soon after took his leave.

"What a desperate little flirt you are!" said Bob, pinching Clytie's flashing cheek. "Nothing will do but you must go for a man that the San Francisco girls have given up long ago."

"I didn't go for him," replied the correct Clytie, a little shocked.

"Then you managed to make him go for you. It's all the same in the end."

"Bob," said Regina, gravely; "you must break yourself of the habit of using such expressions. Young ladies do not go for gentlemen in refined society."

"Don't they?" retorted Bob. "I've seen movements that looked that way, but probably I was mistaken."

"Of course you were mistaken," replied Regina. "Come, Clytie, let us leave this wicked Loy all to himself."

The ladies retired, and the "wicked boy" lighted a cigar with the air of a man on whose conscience small sins rested lightly.

## CHAPTER LIII.

## COMING HOME.

The household settled down into that condition of happy expectation, which, perhaps, is sweeter than happiness itself.

Miss Shaw looked forward to the return of Mr. Gray with a degree of pleasure that gave occasion for several serious remonstrances with herself. Her mind seemed filled with pleasant anticipations, for which her thoughts could give no tangible foundation, but they were no less pleasant for that.

Bob became suddenly a model brother. His reformation was as positive in character as his indulgence had been. He spent his days at the office and his evenings with his sister and Clytie. He even went so far as to purge his vocabulary of certain words to which his sister objected.

Miss Clytie wavered between Mr. Hopp and Bob. Probably, if Bob had manifested a serious desire to hold her to her allegiance, she might have yielded and perhaps have named the day that should make them happy. But the girl's instinct informed her that Bob only loved her as he had been in the habit of loving every pretty girl he met, and she wisely made up her little mind not to spoil her beauty grieving for one so fickle. She was also a little dazzled at the idea, for which she was mainly indebted to Bob, that Mr. Hopp's heart, hand and fortune were at her disposal.

Two or three days after her visit to Mrs. Rhodes, Regina received a telegram from Mr. Gray, informing her that Miles and himself would return overland, and might arrive in twelve days.

Every day after telegrams came from the travelers sometimes signed by Mr. Gray and sometimes by Miles.

There were two or three hundred miles of stage travel between the approaching lines of railroad, but as the weather was pleasant no great delay was expected.

At last a telegram came from the eastern station of the Central Pacific. The travelers were but three days from home.

"Regie," said Bob, don't you think it would be the civil thing to run up to Truckee and meet them?"

"Truckee! Where is that that?"

"It's a day's ride from Sacramento. I can go to Sacramento to-morrow afternoon, and be in Truckee the following day, before the train from the East will get there."

"That is an idea," said Regina; "but I don't see why I cannot go, too."

"Of course you can if your mamma will let you. But as she doesn't know Miles and Mr. Gray are coming, she won't understand why you should want to go to Truckee."

"Ah," said Regina, "what a good thing it is to

be a man. You don't need to ask anybody if you may go."

"Well, you see I started out right. Never reported till I got home. Didn't ask if I might go. Went and told 'em I'd been."

Regina had concealed her knowledge of Mr. Gray's return at Mr. Gray's request, but her inaction was equal to the task of finding an excuse for a trip to Sacramento. She had a number of very dear lady friends in that city, and as Bob was going up, what more natural than that she should embrace the opportunity thus afforded to pay them a visit?

Mrs. Shaw gave a reluctant consent. Miss Clytie was reminded of her duties as hostess pro tem, especially with reference to Mr. Hopp. That exemplary young lady was cautioned also not to give the gentleman too much positive encouragement, unless she intended to make him happy when he should arrive at the conclusion that his happiness was in her keeping.

The next day Regina and Bob were off, ostensibly to Sacramento, but with a pretty well-defined purpose of continuing their journey to Truckee. When they were fairly in the cars on their way to the latter town, it occurred to Regina that her excursion might be construed into an unmaidenly readiness to meet somebody; but after due consideration, she decided that that somebody was Miles.

The cars continued to roll on as they would if her decision had been different, and as they began to climb to the Sierra Nevada, the grandeur of the scenery absorbed the young lady's attention. Too much has already been written of the sublimating panorama which carries the traveler from one surprise to another as he sits in the luxurious car and makes his famous accent, especially as no correct idea of the errors has ever yet been conceived. We pass the exclamations of wonder and admiration that gave vocal animation to the occasion, and land our travelers safely in the town of Truckee.

It was Regina's first glimpse of frontier life, and as her eye scanned the rough visage that thronged about the hotel, she congratulated herself on the presence of her brother.

It was late in the afternoon when they arrived, and the westward bound train was not due for two hours. Their fellow-passengers ate a hurried dinner, the conductor called "all aboard," the engine gave two or three experimental shrieks, and the train started slowly on its long journey.

The brother and sister took a walk to kill time. Everywhere admiring glances followed Regina, but there was nothing in these glances to awaken apprehension.

Night set in and they returned to the hotel. An hour had passed—an hour and a half. The coming train was telegraphed at the next station, six or eight miles away.

Marvel of the age! A journey of three thousand miles was accomplished precisely at the hour and minute the time-table indicated. Over mountains, across rivers, through gorges where the sunbeams never penetrate, and at the precise moment the directing intelligence fixed upon the travelers put in an appearance.

As the moment approached, Bob stood on the plat-



form, watch in hand. At precisely three minutes to 7:15 he returned the watch to his pocket and signaled Regina that the train was in sight.

She came out and stood on the platform. The bull's eye gleamed in the distance, it grew larger and brighter. The train came thundering along, and at last came to a stop.

A score or so of passengers jumped upon the platform. Darkness hid their forms save when the gleams of a passing lantern revealed them for a moment. Bob darted forward, Regina heard an exclamation, and the next moment a pair of arms were round her neck, and a familiar voice was calling her name.

"O, Regie, Regie, Regie," murmured the voice, giving a kiss for each utterance of her name, "how good in you to meet us here."

"It was Bob," answered Regie, perhaps conscious that Mr. Gray would hear. "He made me come."

Mr. Gray had come up, and stood waiting his turn as a well-bred man always should. Regina turned shyly, a flush on her cheek that glowed even in the darkness, and gave him her hand.

"Your brother has earned my eternal gratitude," he said; "this is just what I would have asked, but for fear the journey might be too fatiguing."

"The journey was delightful," answered Regina, "and I couldn't wait patiently at home. Seeing is believing, you know;" and she turned again to embrace Miss.

Now they all began to talk it over. The reader can guess just as well what they said just as well as if their conversation was chronicled in these veracious columns. Mr. Gray was the first to remember that dinner was waiting, and that a night's ride was before them.

Bob laid hold of Miss and marched her toward the dining-room. She looked back over her shoulder to Regie, her dark but brilliant face the picture of girlish happiness.

"How beautiful Miss has grown," said Regie in a low voice to Mr. Gray. "I never saw such a change in so short a time."

"Yes," admitted Mr. Gray, "she has grown very beautiful, and as for her faults I believe we always rather liked them."

"I am sure we missed her sadly. Won't some of our friends be surprised at her coming?"

"Then no one knew she is coming?"

"No one except Mr. and Mrs. Rhodes. But I've so much to tell you."

"And all night to tell it in. How thoughtful in Bob to bring you up here."

"I am afraid Bob was thinking more of himself than me. Since he heard you had found Miss he has counted the hours until he might expect you."

"And Clytie?"

"O," exclaimed Regie, laughing, "Clytie seems much inclined to permit herself to be admired by Mr. Hopp."

"Indeed! I hope Miss Shaw does not like her the less on that account."

"Miss Shaw is not of a jealous disposition," demurely replied the young lady.

They entered the dining-room where a score or more of men and three or four ladies were taking dinner on railroad time. Each one sacrificed a precious moment

when the party entered, but soon resumed their devotion to the important business then on hand.

## CHAPTER LIV.

### MRS. SMITH IS MADE TO UNDERSTAND GREEK.

Our party of travelers arrived in San Francisco two days later. Miss ran up to her room, while Regina prepared Mrs. Shaw and Miss Clytie for her appearance.

Mrs. Shaw's mind was not of a character to receive surprises kindly. The return of Miss was like the return of the dead. Had she been informed that her deceased husband was in an adjoining room waiting for an interview, she would not have been more surprised and confounded than when informed that Miss had come to life, and was at that moment in the house and in the enjoyment of perfect health.

And when Regina outlined the young girl's adventures—told how she had been carried off from their own house—how she had been taken to Valparaiso, and from Valparaiso to Buenos Ayres, from Buenos Ayres to New York, and from New York to San Francisco, and was still alive, joyous and happy—the good lady, after the first paralysis of astonishment, discovered in her strange career the guidance and care of a kind Providence, who alone could enable the young girl to escape unscathed from so many dangers.

Accepting this view of the case, Mrs. Shaw conceived it her duty to receive the wanderer kindly. It would not be well if she turned against one whom Providence had so signally favored. Perhaps a lurking suspicion lingered in the estimable lady's mind that Mr. Gray had had more to do with Miss's adventures than appeared, as the story was related by Regina. She could not, however, resist the force of circumstances, and Miss was again accepted as a member of the family.

The meeting between Clytie and Miss was characteristic of their age and sex. They rushed to each other's arms, drew back, surveyed each other for a moment, then came together with an embrace more prolonged than the first.

"Dear Clytie!" exclaimed Miss; "I am so glad to see you!"

"And I am glad to see you—I am sure," replied the gentle girl, arranging her disordered curls, while she surveyed Miss at her leisure. "You've grown ever so much," she continued, "and grown pretty, too."

"There was a chance for that," rejoined Miss. "I remember how I used to envy you because you were so much prettier than I."

At this stage of the interesting conversation the equitable Aristides made Miss aware of his presence, and the next instant was half-mothered for his pains. Miss was still somewhat emphatic in her demonstrations, and Aristides had ever been her fast friend.

Mrs. James Smith had heard the next morning that Miss had returned. The information was conveyed to her in a note written by Mr. Hopp, in which that gentleman reminded her of the conditions upon which he had consented to continue to act as her counsel in the case of "The People vs. Smith." Miss having appeared, he could no longer oppose the recognition of her just rights.

The note dropped from Mrs. Smith's hand. A change, sudden and almost terrible, came over her face. Every drop of blood fled from her cheeks, leaving the thin surface of rouge just touching the skin, of which a moment before it had seemed a part.

For some moments she sat silent, rigid, her eyes fixed, her lips parted, her white teeth set—the slow rising and falling of her bosom alone indicating that the mechanism of her form still performed its work.

At last she arose, and, with her arms folded across her bosom (a position in which a woman always looks supremely awkward), walked across the room.

She stopped before a mirror, and coldly and critically surveyed the face therein reflected.

Something like a smile parted her lips. It was a smile of derision, of contempt, of hatred, as if she loathed herself for having lost all that made life worth endurance.

"This," she murmured, "is the end. I am beaten. Three years older, three years more of strife, three years of wretchedness, and I stand where I stood when that idiot first put the idea into my head of being somebody else. I might have won if I had strangled the girl, as I ought."

Then, with a pitiful attempt to rally her forces, to rehabilitate that wan and weary face with something of its old youth and beauty, she arranged her still luxuriant hair, smoothed out the wrinkles from her forehead, and again wrestled her lips with a smile.

"There is but one thing that really beats a woman," she murmured to herself, "and that is time. I am not beaten because Miss has been brought back, but because—because—I am no longer young."

Bitter confession for a woman who had lived only to enjoy her triumphs of youth and beauty. Of all who had loved her (and their names were legion), not the love of one would survive the wreck of her beauty. Not one? She smiled a smile of mingled pity and scorn. There was still one—a soft, young fool—but still in the enumeration of population he counted as a man.

The woman stood for a moment scanning her own features, as if striving by force of will to bring back the life and beauty to her face. Her only weapons of warfare were those she had surveyed, and she tried to persuade herself they were yet good for service.

While thus standing before her mirror, a knock sounded on the door.

A servant entered with a card.

She took it and read—"JOHN GRAY."

"Show the gentleman into the public parlor," she said; "I will join him there in a few minutes."

The servant bowed and retired.

"He has come to triumph over me," she thought. "He shall see that I am not yet crushed to the earth."

The excitement of an encounter was just what she needed. The life came back to her face, the slumber-

ing fire to her eyes, and her sensuous mouth became once again moist and warm.

She descended to the parlor. Mr. Gray rose from a chair by the window and advanced to meet her.

"Madam," he said, after the salutations of the day were exchanged, my business is of a character which justifies me in asking the favor of a private interview."

"Indeed; then let me conduct you to my parlor. I have an hour which I place entirely at your service."

Mr. Gray bowed and accompanied the lady to the room she had just quitted.

"Now," she said, sinking upon a sofa and motioning him to a seat, "I am ready to hear the particulars of your journey. It is of that, I presume, of which you wish to speak."

"That and the events that made the journey necessary."

"Tell me first, how did you find Miss? Is she as odd and charming as ever?"

"Miss has changed only for the better. Fortunately she possesses one of those courageous dispositions that rise above the apprehension of evils."

"I have always said she was a singular child. If she only had a fair share of beauty, she would make a sensation in society."

"She does not lack for beauty. But my object in calling upon you was not to discuss the personal merits of my ward, but her relation to yourself."

Mrs. Smith inclined her head.

"Do you still claim to be her mother?"

"I certainly do."

"And to be the widow of her father?"

"I could hardly be legally her mother and not be her father's widow."

"Well, madam, it is in regard to that claim that I am here. The law will settle the question of right; but I find it necessary to provide against the acts of violence, which the law may punish but cannot prevent."

"Please to explain your meaning. What acts of violence do you fear?"

"Some months ago my ward was taken from the home in which I had placed her, and given to a ruffian, from whom she escaped by one of those happy chances which can only happen to one person once in a lifetime. I wish to provide against a similar outrage."

"My dear Mr. Gray, what you are saying is Greek to me."

"Since you insist upon it, I will translate into English that which is Greek to you. Some few months ago, acting in concert with a man known as Warren, and using as an instrument a man known as O'Neill, you caused my ward to be taken from her home and sent her abroad, with the alternative of marriage with O'Neill in case she escaped death. Do you follow me so far?"

"I hear what you say."

"Well, madam, my ward escaped both marriage and death. She escaped the perils that surround every young girl who is deprived of her natural protectors, and is once more in the very house you caused her to be taken from. Now, I desire to provide against a similar outrage on your part or on the part of your associates."

"Well, sir, how do you propose to make provision against a similar outrage?"

"I have prepared a document which I shall request you to sign."

"A document?"

"In which you resign all pretensions to the guardianship of Melissa Smith, and bind yourself not in any way to interfere, except by due process of law, with those who have her in charge."

"It would suit you, doubtless, if I should sign such a document and observe its provisions. I decline, however. Melissa Smith is my daughter, and I shall stand between her and those who would take advantage of her youth and inexperience."

"Madam, you can sign the document or not, as you choose. I give you three days in which to consider the proposition. If, at 11 o'clock on the third day from this, the document is not signed, you and your associates will be arrested for conspiracy. I give you the warning because I am strong enough to give you the advantage."

"Really, Mr. Gray, you are talking as if I had committed a crime. You would positively make me believe that I had caused my daughter to be carried off, if I did not know to the contrary. As a charge this would work admirably. Suspected yourself of sending the child out of town to recover from the effects of having resided too long in too close proximity to yourself, you now intimate to the part of the world that is interested in her welfare, that I, her mother am the party who sent her away. It is clever, Mr. Gray, but it will not work. I am not an amiable woman in my best moods, and, as I feel just now, I decline to oblige you."

"As you please, madam," replied Mr. Gray, rising. "I will not trespass longer on your time."

"As for your absurd charge of conspiracy," she continued, with a side glance from her half-closed eyes, "you know there is nothing in it. Fortunately, judges and juries want evidence before they convict of such offences."

"Yes," replied Mr. Gray; "such evidence as might be furnished by a certain letter of instruction regarding a certain letter of credit drawn by a certain Mrs. John Smith in favor of a certain John O'Neill."

Mrs. Smith raised her eyes full to the face of her companion.

"More Greek," she said, pleasantly. "Sit down again and translate the sentence. I am so dull to-day."

"Madam," replied Mr. Gray, "I have no desire to push you to the wall. You were started in pursuit of a fortune at a time when it seemed as if it might as well come to you as another. Once started you could not well retreat, and you have incurred great risks in striving to gain your ends. You are not only beaten at every point, but every movement is exposed to my view. I have proofs of every charge I make, and, if you refuse my terms, and thereby brave arrest, I pledge you my word that ten years of your remaining youth will be passed at San Quentin. Think well what you do. If the aid of the law is invoked, you must abide by the result."

Mrs. Smith's eyes fell before a gaze in which firmness was tempered with compassion. She comprehended at last that she was completely in Mr. Gray's power.

She sat for some minutes in silence.

"You don't know what you are doing," she said. "You are driving a miserable woman back into the hell which is the last resort of the unfortunate of her sex. Who would not lie and steal to escape this?"

"Madam, you should have thought a little of the young girl to whom this hell would be as full of torment as to you."

"When we are desperate we think only of ourselves. Your sagacity is more than a match for my cunning. Send me to San Quentin, if you will. It is not worse than certain streets in this Christian city."

"I shall not move against you. Leave my ward in peace, and you may rest in peace yourself."

"I ought to thank you, I suppose. You might be harder on me than you are. Leave me now; I want to think."

Mr. Gray bowed and withdrew.

"If I were the woman I once was," she murmured, "I should have killed that man. I am good for nothing—only fit to marry Joseph Fox."

## CHAPTER LV.

### THE PENSIVE ROLE.

Mrs. Smith's last remark was not intended to be complimentary to herself or to Joseph Fox. The state of matrimony had no especial charms for her, nor did she cherish an especial admiration for the young gentleman she had employed her arts to ensnare.

But the "old life"—whatever that might mean—spread its deadly waste before her. She had gained many admirers in the last few months, during which time she had mingled in good society; but, with one exception, these admirers were not sound upon the important question of marriage.

Joseph Fox had experienced for her that infatuation that experienced women of mature years often inspire the other sex with in those years when the passions of the man exist uncontrolled by the judgment. She had presented herself to him in the character of a persecuted woman. No Magdalen, seeking to rise from her shame, but a lovely woman, with a warm, impulsive heart, which his sex had attacked with intent to ruin. She had represented herself as thrown upon the world at a tender age, compelled to marry one she could not love, forced by ill-treatment to fly from her husband, and living ever after in the shadow of the disgrace incurred by that act.

Probably Joseph Fox was not too virtuous to have played the role of which others of his sex were

charged; but her address had erected barriers around herself which he had not the courage to overleap. She placed him at once on the familiar footing of a dear and trusted friend, and a single glance was enough to check his feeble attempts to exercise the prerogatives of his sex.

It is the nature of a woman to despise a man when she can hold him in a restraint based upon fear. They will forgive audacity arising from love, or appreciate forbearance inspired by principle, but a rake at heart, who does not be a rake in deed, is the object upon which they bestow a contempt more profound than their vocabulary of words can express.

But Mrs. Smith was not in a position to consult her own inclinations. She was penniless and in debt. Her lawyer had thrown upon the case upon which she based her claim to the forbearance of her creditors. Her old associates were as destitute as herself. It was marriage—or that life of shameful vicissitude of which, in her youth, she had had more than enough.

After Mr. Gray left her she sat herself down, as she said, to think. With bitter self-reproach her thoughts went back to those wasted years when, prodigal of her youth, she had lived for the pleasure of the passing moment. Disdaining the even and quiet paths in which women less gifted with beauty than herself were content to walk, and which led to the peace of a cheerful home, she had crowded every hour with unbalanced joys; and now, a little past thirty, when a well-spent life is just blossoming into maturity, she was old, faded, neglected, and despised.

The hour approached when Joseph Fox had been accustomed to make his daily visit. The profound disquiet of her mind did not render her oblivious of the requirements of the toilet. On the contrary, she dressed with even more careful study than usual, and, thanks to the aids the genius of man has supplied, she recovered again, in appearance at least, the lost youth she so deeply regretted.

Joseph Fox came at the usual hour. Tall, lank, ungainly, with an aspect of rascality in form and face, he approached with a confidence in his power to please which the patience of the trained intriguante could hardly endure.

Mrs. Smith had resolved on this day to play the pensive role. Sometimes she would dazzle him with her wit and vivacity, but to-day she was not equal to the effort. Having so often excited his admiration, a little play upon his sympathy might not be less effective.

"Dear friend," she said, "I never was so glad to see you. Do you know I began to think you would not come."

"You told me not to come till two," was the commonplace answer, and the youth pulled out his watch to show that he was punctual.

"Perhaps I did; but it seems so long since you were here. I'm afraid I am growing to think too much of your visits."

In the shaded light she looked young and exceedingly beautiful. Her drooping eyelids disclosed the soft glow of eyes into which an expression of sweet sadness had come, and they glanced at him as coyly and shyly as the eyes of a maiden when love first dwells in her heart.

"You can't think too much of my visits," he replied. "I'd stay here all the time, if I could."

"Would you, indeed?"

"You know I would."

He had taken her hand; and now, emboldened by her complaisance, he passed his arm round her waist. She sat still a moment, and then, with a strong effort, put his arm away.

"Forgive me, Joseph, I dare not permit caresses that my heart hungers for. You must be good, and I'll try to be."

Joseph was being led along at a rapid pace. He colored crimson, and his eyes assumed an expression of ravenous fondness.

"I know," she continued, "you are a young man of high principles. However naughty you may have been in certain circles, you would not deceive a trusting heart."

"No," replied Joseph, delighted at the reputation for gallantry he had obtained in her mind; "I could not do that; it isn't in me."

"I am glad to believe so, Joseph. I know you are high-minded and honorable. You have been more than kind to me, and I thank you for it, though I may be compelled to—to—"

"What?" asked Joseph, as she seemed unequal to the task of finishing the sentence.

"Ask you not to come here any more. It breaks my heart; but you know why."

The handsome face was averted, but the young man could see the convulsive movement of her bosom.

"I don't know of any reason," he said, again taking her hand.

"People will talk," was the low response.

"Let them talk," he answered, bravely.

"That will do for you. You are a man, and a little scandal attached to a young man's name does not hurt him much. But I—I must preserve my good name."

If Joseph had been a little more world-wise he might have thought that she was rather late in undertaking the task that she had set herself; but, being still in the transition stage, he could only admit the abstract justice of her position.

"You will soon forget me," she murmured. "The world is before you. Other women will claim—"

Her lip trembled, and her bosom heaved more convulsively than before.

"I don't care for other women," he responded; "I only care for you."

"I believe you like me. I like you. But you know we cannot continue this boy and girl liking. If we could, the world would not let us."

"What is the world to us?" he asked unconsciously, perhaps, quoting from the last novel he had read. "If you like me—"

"I do like you, Joseph; but I love my good name even better. You are too young to marry, and if you were not—"

"I'm not so very young; I'm twenty-one."

"But twenty-one is very young for a man to marry. It is true you have a manly look, and have seen the world."

"Yes," said Joseph, "I have seen the world; but,"

headed, with what he thought a happy inspiration: "I've never seen a woman I loved until I met you."

"Do you really love me? It seems so very strange; so many women must love you. Do you really wish to make me your wife?"

The young man had entered that room without any thought of speedy marriage. He was not aware he had proposed until he found himself more than half accepted. With those sad, pleading eyes looking into his, he could not retreat. He uttered the fatal "I do," received into his arms her palpitating form, and heard her low, sweet voice murmur: "There; I am yours."

Mrs. Smith did not play the yielding role too long. Before the youth was ready for a change of tactics, she was discussing the practical bearings of the contract and arranging the details of the fiscal ceremony.

Two weeks afterward the ceremony took place. Mrs. Smith, with her most gracious air, presented herself to Dr. Fox as his daughter-in-law, much to that gentleman's astonishment.

## CHAPTER LVI.

### CONCLUSION.

For something more than nine days Miss was a heroine. Everybody had heard her romantic history, and everybody desired to see her. She became so well-known that Regina hardly dared to appear with her on the street or at the theatre, except when protected by the drapery of a private-box.

The young girl bore her honors with becoming grace. Always a conspicuous personage, even when conspicuous in wretchedness, she was not in the least abashed when masculine heads turned to catch a glimpse of her face in the street, or when ladies leveled their opera-glasses at her in the theatre.

Bob continued to be her escort everywhere, and he enjoyed the position. There was now no question as to his allegiance. He had eyes only for the little dark beauty whose willful and imperious ways were a constant torment and a constant delight. The young ladies of the Free-and-Easy Club recognized their rival and scoffed at his infatuation. Bob Shaw, they said, was not the boy he used to be. Formerly he had ruled the girls—now a girl ruled him.

Miss, however, was not the girl to fold her wings until she had tried their power. As she advanced toward young ladyhood she developed decided symptoms of that coquettish instinct which is said to be an especial attribute of her sex. Her early experience gave her an ease and assurance in gentlemen's society that were a constant surprise. (A little impertinent at times,

she was so bright and piquant that men only vied with each other to see which should contribute most to the pleasant process of making her a spoiled child.)

Mr. Gray alone retained his old ascendancy over her mind. Kind and indulgent, though firm, he held her in a restraint the more absolute as it was self-imposed. A glance would check the wildest excess of animal spirits, and bring her, tender and repentant, to his side.

One afternoon, about two months after her return, Miss entered Mr. Gray's office. The business of the day was over, and the young lawyer was comparatively at leisure. She perched herself upon the table, and, taking his head between her two hands, looked into his eyes.

"You wicked man," she said, after a time, "why don't you tell me your secrets?"

"Suppose I have no secrets to tell?"

"You thought you had, but you haven't. I see it all in her eyes."

"In whose eyes, wonderful child?"

"Reggie's, wonderful man."

"What do you see in Reggie's eyes?"

"I see you there, and I see her in your eyes. You needn't deny it; I give my consent."

"Thank you, Miss. What shall I say to Reggie's brother when he asks me for my little pet?"

"Tell him I'm going to be an old maid."

"A nice old maid you'll make! You are not yet fifteen, and you have more beaux than any other girl I know of."

"What a story! You know I give them no encouragement."

Of course not! You always were a model of propriety! But tell me, Missy," he continued, drawing the young girl to his side, "do you love Reggie as much as ever?"

"Yes, just as much. It is strange, but I have never been jealous of Reggie. If she is your wife," she continued, in a low tone, "she will let you love me all the same. You will, won't you?"

"Always, Missy. Are you not my darling sister as much as ever?"

For answer the child wound her arms round his neck and laid her cheek against his.

At this interesting moment Regina appeared in the doorway. She paused a second, and then advanced into the room.

"I thought I would find you here," she said to Miss, "Why didn't you tell me you were coming?"

"Because," answered Miss, "I wanted to see Mr. Gray alone. I'll go now and have a romp with Tim."

Miss disappeared, thoughtfully closing the office-door behind her. Mr. Gray arose, and putting Regina into a chair, stood by her side.

"We have her consent," he said, bending over Regina and kissing her forehead. "The child has decided all."

"Are you sure she doesn't care?"

"I cannot flatter myself that she has ever thought of me except as a friend and brother."

"I hope," said Regina, "that she will love Bob. He worships her. If she should prove indifferent he would return to his old ways."

"Missy is very young yet to love any one except as she loves me."

"I am so glad she doesn't love you as I do," responded Regina, with a flush on her cheek and a tender light in her eyes.

"So am I," replied Mr. Gray, bending lower and folding the young girl in his arms. "So glad."

Miss finished her romp with Tim, and came bounding back to the office. If her loving heart felt a pang at the thought of losing the first place in her old master's affections, neither Regina nor the master were permitted to know it.

Some months passed. One day when Regina and Miss were taking their afternoon stroll on Montgomery street, the former was startled by an exclamation from her companion. The next moment Miss had left her side, and was darting like a fawn across the street.

They were at the corner of California street, and a group of gentlemen were standing in front of a broker's office. From the group a tall gentleman detached himself, and advanced to meet the young girl.

"What will become of that child?" murmured Regina to herself, as she beheld an unconventional greeting, after which Miss and the gentleman walked slowly along on the opposite side of the street.

Miss, unconscious of the eyes that were upon her, was talking rapidly and earnestly to her companion. At the corner of the next street they shook hands, and Miss came back to Regina, her cheeks aglow with excitement.

"Guess who that gentleman is," she said, ignoring in her enthusiasm the look of reproof that was plainly visible in Regina's face.

"He ought to be a very near relation," said Regina, to justify such a cordial greeting.

"How could I help it?" answered Miss. "That gentleman is Colonel Wade."

"Colonel Wade?"

"Isn't he a splendid-looking man? and he's come to San Francisco to live."

"But, Missy, what will Mr. Gray say to such an exhibition of affection in public, for a man of his reputation?"

"Mr. Gray will say I did just right. Colonel Wade may not be a nice man, but he was good to me. I don't know what might have become of me if Colonel Wade had not taken care of me."

Miss understood Mr. Gray in this instance better than Regina. Not only did he fail to censure Miss, but he called on Colonel Wade and invited that gentleman to call on his ward.

The invitation was accepted. In time Mr. Gray was informed that the handsome colonel was no longer an objectionable member of society. He had given up cards and taken to stocks. It was a more congenial variety of gambling, he said, but more reputable. He was tired of being an outcast and longed for respectability. Stocks were respectable. Henceforth he should gratify his taste for gambling by buying and selling mining stocks.

Thus clothed in the garb of respectability, the colonel became a frequent visitor at the Shaw mansion. He devoted himself to Miss until satisfied that devo-

tion was useless, then relapsed into the position of ordinary friend. Bob was greatly relieved at this result, and generously introduced the colonel to some of his own lady friends.

Among them was the imaginative young girl who has briefly appeared in these columns—Miss Kitty Fox. The colonel's manly beauty attracted Miss Kitty's wayward fancy. A second meeting followed the first. The colonel probably reasoned that respectability could not be more readily attained than through an alliance with a popular clergyman's daughter. Miss Kitty was not averse to becoming the medium of his restoration. One day when their acquaintance was about two weeks old, they went quietly to Oakland, were married in due form, and returned to ask the paternal blessing.

The paternal blessing was withheld for a time, but finding that the wayward couple got along very well without it, it was finally granted. So far as is known, the young wife never had occasion to regret her somewhat venturesome step.

Early in summer Regina and Mr. Gray were married. Miss was first bride-smaid, and Clytie, who had been summoned home, came down to be present at the ceremony. Mr. Hoop accepted the situation like a man, and consoled himself as soon as decorum would permit. Need we add that the correct Clytie assisted in the work of consolation. Their marriage took place shortly after. The ceremony was celebrated at the Mountain Ranch, and among the guests were Mr. and Mrs. Gray, Miss, and Bob.

We might write a chapter descriptive of the visit of Miss to her old home. The rough miners who remembered her as the ragged and wretched daughter of a drunkard, were at first a little shy of the brilliant young lady who now appeared in their midst. But when they found that her heart was as warm and her nature as simple and frank as ever, they took her figuratively speaking, to their bosoms, and made her visit one long ovation. With Mr. Gray, Regina and Bob she visited the old school-house, and lived again in the scene of her first meeting with her beloved master.

The next two years of the life of our heroine were devoted to study. At least, she became the inmate of a fashionable boarding-school, and gave sufficient time to her lessons to keep up with her class. But society claimed some of her time and Bob claimed more. This young man had formally proposed for her hand, and been placed on the list of candidates. Mr. Gray would not permit his ward to be in any way compromised by an engagement until she should arrive at years of discretion. Miss herself remained firm in the determination to live an old maid. She had a good home, she said, with the people she loved best, and she need not marry. She evinced considerable fondness for the childish pastime of playing with hearts, and thereby kept poor Bob in a state of torment.

The time came, however, in her eighteenth year, when she changed her mind. We can give no good reason for the change. The same home remained to her, and her fortune enabled her to gratify all her wants. Yet, with reason or without, she must have changed her mind, for one day Bob made his second demand of Mr. Gray, this time backed with the same-

tion of the other party most deeply interested. A grand wedding followed in due time, and the guests went into ecstasies over the brilliant beauty of the bride and the many bearing of the groom. Bob was probably the happiest man in the world that day, and to all appearance the day has had many fellows. He is proud of his wife, and at times is disposed to doubt if she really is the little runaway he accosted so rudely on the Day View mills.

Miss was never brought in contact with her mother. Mother Nell manifested a little interest in her daughter at times, but never expressed a desire for an interview. She comprehended probably that she had badly fulfilled, or left unfulfilled, the duties of wife and mother, and was content to remain out of sight.

Miss and Regina became frequent visitors at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Rhodes, and are firm believers in the Spiritual telegraph. Mr. Gray shakes his wise head and admits that it is very strange—quite incomprehensible, in fact. But he is still waiting for proof which he can't reason away.

Mrs. Smith lived with her young husband a year

and then accepted an annuity from Dr. Fox to set him free. The good doctor's daughter was more fortunate. Colonel Wade found respectable gambling as diverting as the other variety, and less hazardous to life and limb. He amassed a fortune, joined Dr. Fox's church, and now, though he engineers operations that involve in ruin a hundred, where he formerly ruled one, he is a very respectable member of society.

Mr. Gray prospered in his profession, and his accomplished wife became a social leader. Regina often visits the office where she first met her husband, and recalls the interview when he gave her Supreme Court Reports to read, and asked her name when she was preparing to go. She says she never ought to have spoken to him again, but is glad on the whole that she did not do as she ought.

Bob never relapsed into what he calls his old ways. Regina says that a high-spirited and exacting wife is just what he needs to keep him straight, and daily thanks her stars that Miss married Bob instead of Mr. Gray.

THE END.

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  54. **The Young Collegian.** Farce. 1 Act. By T. W. Robertson. 3 Male, 2 Female Characters.
  55. **Catherine Howard.** Historic Play. 3 Acts. By W. E. Suter. 12 Male, 5 Female Characters.

# DE WITT'S ACTING PLAYS.—CONTINUED.

- No.
56. **Two Gay Deceivers.** Farce. 1 Act. By T. W. Robertson. 3 Male Characters.
  57. **Noemie.** Drama. 2 Acts. By T. W. Robertson. 4 Male, 4 Female Characters.
  58. **Deborah.** (Leah.) Drama. 3 Acts. By Charles Smith Cheltenham. 7 Male, 6 Female Characters.
  59. **The Post-Boy.** Drama. 2 Acts. By H. T. Craven. 5 Male, 3 Female Characters.
  60. **The Hidden Hand.** Drama. 4 Acts. By Tom Taylor. 5 Male, 5 Female Characters.
  61. **Plot and Passion.** Drama. 3 Acts. By Tom Taylor. 7 Male, 2 Female Characters.
  62. **A Photographic Fix.** Farce. 1 Act. By Frederick Hay. 3 Male, 2 Female Characters.
  63. **Marriage at any Price.** Farce. 1 Act. By J. P. Wooler. 5 Male, 3 Female Characters.
  64. **A Household Fairy.** A Domestic Sketch. 1 Act. By Francis Talfourd. 1 Male, 1 Female Characters.
  65. **Checkmate.** Comedy-Farce. 2 Acts. By Andrew Halliday. 6 Male, 5 Female Characters.
  66. **The Orange Girl.** Drama in a Prologue and 3 Acts. By Henry Leslie. 18 Male, 4 Female Characters.
  67. **The Birth-place of Podgers.** Farce. 1 Act. By John Hollingshead. 7 Male, 3 Female Characters.
  68. **The Chevalier de St. George.** Drama. 3 Acts. By T. W. Robertson. 9 Male, 3 Female Characters.
  69. **Caught by the Cuff.** Farce. 1 Act. By Frederick Hay. 4 Male, 1 Female Characters.
  70. **The Bonnie Fish-Wife.** Farce. 1 Act. By Charles Selby. 3 Male, 1 Female Characters.
  71. **Doing for the Best.** Domestic Drama. 2 Acts. By M. Rapphino Lacy. 5 Male, 3 Female Characters.
  72. **A Lame Excuse.** Farce. 1 Act. By Frederick Hay. 4 Male, 2 Female Characters.
  73. **Fettered.** Drama. 3 Acts. By Watts Phillips. 11 Male, 4 Female Characters.
  74. **The Garrick Fever.** Farce. 1 Act. By J. R. Planché. 7 Male, 4 Female Characters.
  75. **Adrienne.** Drama. 3 Acts. By Henry Leslie. 7 Male, 3 Female Characters.
  76. **Chops of the Chunnel.** Nautical Farce. 1 Act. By Frederick Hay. 3 Male, 2 Female Characters.
  77. **The Roll of the Drum.** Drama. 3 Acts. By Thomas Egerton Wilks. 8 Male, 4 Female Characters.
  78. **Special Performances.** Farce. 1 Act. By Wilmot Harrison. 7 Male, 3 Female Characters.
  79. **A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing.** Domestic Drama. 1 Act. By Tom Taylor. 7 Male, 5 Female Characters.
  80. **A Charming Pair.** Farce. 1 Act. By Thomas J. Williams. 4 Male, 3 Female Characters.
  81. **Vandyke Brown.** Farce. 1 Act. By A. C. Troughton. 3 Male, 3 Female Characters.
  82. **Peep o' Day.** Irish Drama. 4 Acts. By Edmund Falconer. 12 Male, 4 Female Characters.
  83. **Thrice Married.** Personation Piece. 1 Act. By Howard Paul. 6 Male, 1 Female Characters.
  84. **Not Guilty.** Drama. 4 Acts. By Watts Phillips. 10 Male, 6 Female Characters.
  85. **Locked in with a Lady.** Sketch from Life. By H. R. Addison. 1 Male, 1 Female Characters.
  86. **The Lady of Lyons.** Play. 5 Acts. By Lord Lytton. 10 Male, 3 Female Characters.
  87. **Locked Out.** Comic Scene. 1 Act. By Howard Paul. 1 Male, 1 Female Characters.
  88. **Founded on Facts.** Farce. 1 Act. By J. P. Wooler. 4 Male, 2 Female Characters.
  89. **Aunt Charlotte's Maid.** Farce. 1 Act. By J. M. Morton. 3 Male, 3 Female Characters.
  90. **Only a Halfpenny.** Farce. 1 Act. By John Oxenford. 2 Male, 3 Female Characters.
  91. **Walpole.** Comedy in Rhyme. 3 Acts. By Lord Lytton. 7 Male, 2 Female Characters.
  92. **My Wife's Out.** Farce. 1 Act. By G. Herbert Rodwell. 2 Male, 3 Female Characters.
  93. **The Area Belle.** Farce. 1 Act. By William Brough and Andrew Halliday. 3 Male, 2 Female Characters.
  94. **Our Clerks.** Farce. 1 Act. 7 Male, 5 Female Characters.
  95. **The Pretty Horse Breaker.** Farce. 1 Act. By William Brough and Andrew Halliday. 3 Male, 10 Female Characters.
  96. **Dearest Mamma.** Comedietta. 1 Act. By Walter Gordon. 4 Male, 3 Female Characters.
  97. **Orange Blossoms.** Comedietta. 1 Act. By J. P. Wooler. 3 Male, 3 Female Characters.
  98. **Who is Who?** Farce. 1 Act. By Thomas J. Williams. 3 Male, 2 Female Characters.
  99. **The Fifth Wheel.** Comedy. 3 Acts. 10 Male, 2 Female Characters.
  100. **Jack Long.** Drama. 2 Acts. By J. B. Johnstone. 5 Male, 1 Female Characters.
  101. **Fernande.** Drama. 3 Acts. By Victorien Sardou. 11 Male, 10 Female Characters.
  102. **Foiled.** Drama. 4 Acts. By O. W. Cornish. 8 Male, 3 Female Characters.
  103. **Faust and Marguerite.** Drama. 3 Acts. By T. W. Robertson. 9 Male, 7 Female Characters.
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  105. **Which of the Two.** Comedietta. 1 Act. By John M. Morton. 2 Male, 10 Female Characters.
  106. **Up for the Cattle Show.** Farce. 1 Act. By Harry Lemon. 6 Male, 2 Female Characters.
  107. **Cupboard Love.** Farce. 1 Act. By Frederick Hay. 2 Male, 1 Female Characters.
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  109. **Locked In.** Comedietta. 1 Act. By J. P. Wooler. 2 Male, 3 Female Characters.
  110. **Poppleton's Predicaments.** Farce. 1 Act. By Charles M. Rae. 3 Male, 6 Female Characters.
  111. **The Liar.** Comedy. 2 Acts. By Samuel Foote. 7 Male and 2 Female Characters.

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1. **The Last of the Mohicans.** Ethiopian Sketch. By J. C. Stewart. 3 Male, 1 Female Characters.
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