

UNDER THE CEDARS;

OR,

WHAT THE YEARS BROUGHT.

BY

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TO  
*HER WHOSE NAME I BEAR*

I Dedicate  
THIS MY FIRST BOOK.

UNDER THE CEDARS.

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OR,

WHAT THE YEARS BROUGHT.

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## CHAPTER I.

"Full well they laughed, with counterfeited glee,  
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;  
Full well the busy whisper, circling round,  
Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned."

"BUZZ — buzz — buzz !"

He needn't have spoken so harshly; he might have spoken less sarcastically; just a little whirr of machinery, that was all; no other man would have noticed it; but it was too much for this "pattern of perfection," whose pride centred in the fact that *his* was always the best disciplined school in town.

"Buzz — buzz — buzz ! Enough of this. The next one who leaves his or her seat without permission, or



communicates in any way, will suffer the penalty after school."

'Tis the last drop which makes the cup run over, and I was conscious that it was myself who had added that same last mite. This is how it was.

The seat at my left was occupied by one Joe Redfield, a stout, red-haired, freckled-faced youth of seventeen. I needn't describe him farther; every country school can boast of its Joe in winter; summer finds them leading a dull, prosy life on the farm; you can tell them there by the stout, clumsy shoes, which are a "mile too big," and whose knotted leather strings—if they can boast any such pretensions—never magnify their office; coarse straw hat, with a fringed rim on one side, minus a band: they are a perpetual torment to older sisters, and women folks in general, and are reminded daily, by every hand on the farm, that "boys are more plague than profit," all of which they take in that careless, matter-of-fact way, which is another peculiar characteristic, letting all roll off like the big drops from a cabbage leaf, contented to bide their time, till the favorable moment comes in which they can pay old scores with interest.

Joe had been absent in the morning, and didn't know the lesson in grammar, assigned the previous day, had

been lengthened two pages. I had watched him twice going over the dull list of irregular verbs; had seen him stop at that point, and turn back a leaf, and my sympathies were aroused. Joe detested grammar; and if the lesson—the whole lesson—was not learned perfectly at the hour for recitation, he would have to remain after school until it was: 'twas useless to ask permission to speak. "No questions during a recitation;" that was a law of the school, and a law once made and signed by Wilmer T. Kingsley was as unalterable as that of the Medes and Persians.

The class in rhetoric had just taken their places, and a half hour was the time allotted them. Our class in grammar followed; it was too bad. I glanced at Joe, and met his eye. Opening my own book at the place, I ran a finger over the entire lesson, and with a knowing look which tells so much among scholars, and which is so readily understood, glanced towards the teacher to establish my authority, and again pointed at those two additional pages.

Joe comprehended, as the buzzing back of his book testified; so did Mr. Kingsley, with one eye on us, and the other on the rhetoric he held in his hand. *He* always had an eye for everything. Had that been all, it might have passed unblamed, if not unnoticed; but

in my eagerness to impart knowledge to Joe, I let the book slip from my hand, and in trying to save that, my pencil fell to the floor, and rolled down the aisle.

So the mite was added, and the cup run over.

I may as well describe our teacher here as elsewhere. He was not quite twenty-five at the time, though he looked older; very tall, very straight; nose aquiline, and eyes, the original color might have been gray, but they changed to black when excited, and became living coals when angry. His hair was dark, and beard the same color. I never before saw so handsome a beard. I have said his pride centred in a well-disciplined school; his mustache should be included; of that he was not only proud, but vain. 'Twas a way he had, whenever he threatened, to run a finger across his lip, and wind the end of his mustache around it. No wonder it curled so gracefully. I knew, when my mishap roused his "righteous indignation," just *the* motion that added emphasis to his threatened punishment — knew it as well as if I had looked at *him*, instead of the sly glance cast at Joe. *He* understood it too, and bending lower behind his book, ran a finger across his own upper lip, which was smooth as "Uncle Ned's" bald pate, in token of appreciation.

Did you ever go to Quaker meeting, and sit through

one whole session, while the brothers and sisters waited and waited in vain for the moving of the spirit? I have never since been inside of the old Quaker meeting-house which graced our village without thinking of the half hour following Mr. Kingsley's threat, and comparing its stillness to the darkness which may be felt.

I remember to have experienced an almost irresistible desire of springing forward and giving vent to my feelings in one loud scream, and was wondering what punishment would be deemed sufficient to fall on my rebellious head, when the recitation ended, and the class in the floor were ordered to their seats.

I drew a long breath of relief, and was gathering up books, paper, and pencil, in preparation for the lesson in grammar and analysis, next in order, when Joe gave my arm a severe rap, and with the words "Quick, Fan, quick!" in a loud whisper, pointed to the floor.

Only a piece of ribbon, which Jennie, my seat-mate, had unconsciously drawn from her pocket with her handkerchief, as she was coming up the aisle, had met his eye; but at the first glance I knew what was attached to it, and regardless of all else, sprang from my seat, dropping books and pencil in my eagerness to

secure it before it should be crushed under some careless foot.

A piece of blue ribbon, to which were attached a silver dime, and a gold seal of the most exquisite workmanship, on which was engraved the name "Theodora."

"The author of this mischief may bring the cause of the disturbance to the desk, if she is capable of performing such a feat without moving the foundations of the earth. I wouldn't advise any unnecessary haste!"

'Twas but the work of an instant to slip off the seal and toss it into Jennie's lap, who received her treasure with a grateful look, which expressed far more than any words could have done.

The act was unnoticed; and boiling over with rage, I carried what remained to the desk, as directed. For a moment Mr. Kingsley regarded it with a scornful smile, then, lifting it up to the view of the whole school, remarked, in an ironical tone, —

"Judas sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver. Joe has not only sold *himself* for *one*, but also betrayed his friend into a like difficulty."

If angry before, surely no words could express the feeling then. After a while he opened a grammar to the place of our lesson, and touched a bell, the signal for our class.

"If Miss Wilbur feels equal to the task, she can take her place, and distinguish herself with the others."

"Thank you!" I muttered, indignantly, neither thinking or caring, in my wrath, what would follow.

"There seems to be no call for *thanks*, or words, even," was the reply; and the sudden twirl of the heavy mustache reminded me that I had, besides leaving my seat, been guilty also of *speaking* without permission.

"Don't mind it a bit, Fan," whispered Joe, when Mr. Kingsley's attention was called another way for a moment; "not one bit;" adding, as he drew once more a finger across his upper lip, "Just as goods be hung for an old sheep as a lamb!"

"Mean, hateful old thing! If I wanted to fight, I'd take one my own size. Not that I care anything about it myself; but to strike a girl! Well, you bore it like a hero, Fan. I was so glad you didn't cry. Did he hurt you much?"

For reply I held out a hand on which two or three little white blisters were plainly visible.

"Darned old hornet! don't he know the difference between soft pine and *lignum vitæ*? Humph! he might have hammered all night on my paws without leaving

a mark. I wanted to tell him, when he got through, hoped he hadn't damaged that old clapper of his any. Wish I had now!"

"Why, Joe, I thought you was almost killed. He didn't strike me half so hard as you, and he took the little rule, too; 'twasn't *that* I cared for, any way. I could bear the pain well enough; but what will brother Charlie say?"

"Say? What d'ye s'pose he'll say? If he is any kind of a chap, he will go over to the school-house in the morning, and give him an all-fired lickin'—that's what he *ought* to say, and that's just what I'd do, if 'twas my sister. Don't know as I should mind it very much if Nance did get a few side-winders; always pokin' into other folks' business. S'pose she ran all the way home to-night just to blab!"

"I don't think Charlie could blame me very much if he knew just how it was; but he won't believe—that is—he will think—" and there I broke down entirely.

"Come, now, Fan, don't cry; 'tis too bad, anyway, and he mightn't have been so provoking, either; just like a cat, they ain't satisfied to gobble up a mouse after they get one, till they half torment the life out of it. Hope he got a new kink in that 'musquash' of his he feels so grand of."

"Hush, Joe; he is coming; he will hear you."

"Don't care if he does; he may thank his ears for all the information he gets. Here are your books. Wish I had to go the same road all the way. Old Hickory made his calculations to overtake you after I turn the corner here. Darn, if I ain't half a mind to keep right along, just to plague him. You'll be at the pond to-night?"

"Guess so, if Jennie goes. Why didn't she wait for me?"

"Didn't you see how she was crying when school was dismissed? I'll bet the tender-hearted chicken took to her heels the minute she was outside the door!" and putting his hands in his pockets, Joe wheeled around the corner, whistling at the top of his voice.

I knew it was no other than Mr. Kingsley who came up at the same moment, and walked by my side, keeping step with my slow pace; but I deigned neither word nor look.

"A nice evening for the skating party," he remarked after a while.

No answer.

"I went down the lake this morning before school, to see for myself if the prospect was favorable. I never saw ice in better condition."

Still no reply.

The silence on my part might have continued the whole distance; but at that moment I slipped, and should have fallen, had not a strong hand held me up.

"Excuse my thoughtlessness, Fannie. Here, let me take your books; it is very slippery."

"Thank you, I can carry them myself," was the crusty reply; and turning to cross the street, in my eagerness to retain my hold of them, I slipped and fell. Without a word he picked up the books, and offered his hand for assistance; but I turned indignantly away.

"Have I sinned past all forgiveness? You must let me aid you. Are you badly hurt?"

"Not dangerously!"

"Will you accept my aid?"

"No!"

"Will you please rise?"

"By and by; there seems to be no cause for *unnecessary haste*," with due emphasis on the last words.

"Ah! here is your brother. Good afternoon, doctor; your presence here seems most desirable; perhaps you might be deemed worthy to assist this fallen angel to her feet."

"That you, sis? Are you hurt?" he asked, smiling at the *nom de plume* Mr. Kingsley had bestowed upon

me; and before I could answer, he lifted me as if I had been but a feather's weight, and drawing my arm through his, we walked along together, the others chatting all the while.

My first thought was to leave them, and go by myself; but I felt the clasp on my arm tighten, and knew how useless would be the attempt.

"Good night, Miss Fannie. I hope your fall will not prevent your making one of the party on the ice, this evening." We had reached the gate before our door. "Here are your books."

I took them without replying, and turned abruptly away.

"*Fannie, sister!*" that was all brother Charlie said; but the look was enough—that peculiar look which only he could or ever did give me—a sorrowful, wounded look, that never failed, for the moment, to conquer my most stubborn moods.

"Good night," I said, offering a hand to my teacher, without raising my eyes from the ground.

He took it in silence, then turned, and walked swiftly away.

## CHAPTER II.

"The wildest ills that darken life  
 Are rapture to the bosom's strife;  
 The tempest in its blackest form  
 Is beauty to the bosom's storm.  
 The ocean lashed to fury loud,  
 Its high wave mingled with the cloud,  
 Is peaceful, sweet serenity  
 To anger's dark and stormy sea!"

"SO much for all my good resolutions this morning. It's no use to try; I can't help it. There's Jennie never thinks of losing her temper, let what will happen; and I'm sure she has a great deal more to try her patience than I. 'Tis nothing but 'run and do this,' and 'run and do that,' the minute she steps into the house. If she finds time to sit down a minute, those everlasting shoes must be bound or stitched, or the cradle rocked, or a button sewed on. There's always something to keep her at it. Wonder what I should do in her shoes? I know one thing; I'd put those squalling young ones in a way to wait upon themselves, or else break their necks. Wonder

what poor folks want of so many — always under foot. Her mother might let her have a little time to herself. May be she would if she was her own mother; but then her father is just the same, only more so! Thinks all she is good for is to wait upon the rest; and then, when she has run till she can't hardly stand, all the thanks she gets is, 'Humph! only a girl! Girls don't know nothin' — girls ain't good for nothin', only to make expense — girls don't do nothin'!' Wonder if they don't. Wouldn't I like to be in her place long enough to give him a piece of my mind?

"Seems to me Charlie is long enough, out there in the stable; suppose he thinks I'm all the one to blame. I wish he knew the whole — everything — but he never can, for there's Jennie's seal in the scrape, and I can't tell of that, because nobody else knows anything about it. How sober he was out there at the gate! Mr. Kingsley needn't think I spoke to him because I wanted to — 'twas only to please Charlie. Not that I like him a bit better, or ever shall. I hate the sight of him, and am going to, just as long as he stays here. He had no business to say what he did. I would do just the same again, any way, and I'll never say I'm sorry — never! O, dear! I wish

Charlie would come ;” and having thus relieved my feelings, I threw myself upon the sofa, and burst into tears.

The clock struck five, and then six. It was past our usual hour for tea, but no bell rang, and nothing had I seen or heard of the housekeeper, whose sympathy I had depended upon largely. She had always stood between me and harm, since my earliest recollections, defending me in all cases, without regard to right or justice.

Charlie had come in, for I could hear the opening and closing of doors occasionally, and the clatter of dishes, but nothing further. Could it be they were eating without me? The hour after school had always been mine, when Charlie was not away on professional visits; and now, when I had most to tell, and needed him more than ever, he had deserted me. By and by, after a time that seemed almost an age, he came in, and took his old seat before the fireplace. I had always been ready to welcome him to the old office chair — the same my father had used before him — till the present evening; but it seemed now as if all at once a great gulf separated us. I could bear it no longer, and again burst forth in a fit of uncontrollable weeping.

“Fannie, sister!” It was a tone very different from

the previous one. I raised my eyes, and met his own, full of sympathy — of entreaty. He extended a hand, and without a word I sprang to my place in his lap; and throwing both arms about his neck, laid my head upon his shoulder.

“O, Charlie, are you so very, very angry?”

“Angry for *what*, child? Why do you ask?”

“You never did so before.”

“Never did what before?”

“Never came home at night, and went about house after your chores were done, without coming here to talk with me, and — and then eat supper without calling me — and —”

“Why, child, I haven’t eaten supper. What put that idea into your head?”

“I heard you in the dining-room, and auntie hasn’t been in here, either, or called me. I thought you were both eating supper without me.”

“You foolish puss, why didn’t you come out there and see about it, instead of lying there curled up on the sofa? You’ve had your cry all for nothing.”

“That wasn’t all!”

“What else then? If you didn’t cry for your supper, what was it?”

“O, everything. I couldn’t help it. I thought you

was angry because I didn't speak to Mr. Kingsley; but you don't know how much I had to provoke me!"

"Yes, I know all about it. 'Twas not anger; I was only grieved, partly because you had no more control of your temper, and partly because I thought he misunderstood you. It was not wilful disobedience on your part at first; so I think you are in a great measure excusable."

"O, I'm so glad you think so! That was all I cared for, or most all. I shall never forgive Mr. Kingsley. It was unjust and unkind."

"Never? Fannie, never is a long word. What saith the Scripture? 'For if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive yours.'"

"I can't help it; he had no business to do so; and then to be so aggravating, with all the rest. He did it on purpose."

"Perhaps not. You must make the same allowances for him you would wish others to make for you. He has a peculiar temperament and disposition, as well as yourself; and you know, the greater the temptation, the greater the victory achieved, if we conquer."

"He had no business to do so if he has; it wasn't fair, and I shall always hate him as long as I live."

"'He that hateth his brother is a murderer.'"

"He isn't my brother, and I wouldn't own him if he was. It wasn't fair, and you know it. You wouldn't have done so!"

"May be not; but I might have done a great deal worse."

"You know better; you never get out of patience, any more than Jennie. I wonder if I shall ever learn to control my temper as she does?"

"Not in your own strength. You must go, like her, to the Great Teacher."

"It wouldn't make any difference. I have tried and tried, and 'tis always just the same. I can't help it. You know this morning we talked it all over, and I was going to begin anew, and not lose my temper all the year; and now see how it ends. I don't like birth-days, any way. I always begin them by trying to turn over a new leaf, and I always spoil the page before night, and make it worse than any before it. I'm going to give it up now, and just keep right along. 'You know what the minister said last Sunday — 'Everything God gives us is given us to use;' so of course he meant me to use my temper."

"Yes, but he didn't mean for the temper to use you; that may be your cross, which if taken up aright will win the crown. 'He that is slow to anger is better



than the mighty, and he that ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city.' Your birthday is not wholly past; there is time left yet for good resolutions, time enough to turn over another leaf. And always remember, Fannie, whatever may happen, and however blotted the pages, that your brother still loves you, and is willing to help you; and now, if you wish to see the birthday present I promised this morning, you will find it on the table in the hall."

"Skates! Just what I wanted most. You always know what to get. But here are two pairs, alike. What am I to do with so many?"

"Anything you wish; they are all yours, and at your disposal. Can you think of any friend who would be pleased with a birthday present like your own?"

"O, I know — Jennie! We are both fifteen to-day, and you got the others for her."

"I have given both pairs to you; if you choose for her to have one, recollect it will be your gift."

"Aren't they nice ones! — the prettiest I ever saw. Three or four of the other girls have new ones, and are going to try them this evening. Why, it's half past six, and we haven't had supper yet; and I haven't seen Mrs. Hall since I got home. Where is she?"

"Over to Mr. Brown's. She will not come home to-

night; so we shall have to do without her. Jennie has another brother to divide her cares."

"She is always having her cares divided. Now she will have to stay at home from school the rest of the winter. Bother the babies! I wish —"

"Hush, Fannie! Remember —"

"Well, I think 'tis too bad; and if Jennie can't go skating to-night, I don't want to; and if she doesn't go to school any more, I shall stay at home too. Is auntie coming back in the morning?"

"I think not. I told her to stay as long as they needed her, and we could keep house together. Do you think you can manage without her, if you have somebody to help you?"

"I don't know. I'm afraid you would have the worst of it; and I don't know who will come to help me, either."

"O, I found somebody all ready and willing. At Mrs. Hall's suggestion I proposed a change of house-keepers; and while she stays there, Jennie is coming to stay here and help you. Will that suit?"

"You know there's nothing in the world would suit me better. I understand it now; that was you getting supper I heard. Why didn't you call me to help you?"

"You can go now, and help me eat it!"

"Dear old Charlie, you are the very best brother in all the world. How can I ever thank you, or love you, half enough?"

"By loving God more!" And I knew by his look, and the kiss that accompanied his answer, what was the burden of his prayers; and yet I lingered!

### CHAPTER III.

"When shall we three meet again?  
When shall we three meet again?  
Oft shall glowing hope expire,  
Oft shall wearied love retire,  
Oft may death and sorrow reign,  
Ere we here shall meet again."

**W**HAT a glorious evening that was, the 15th of January, 185-!

It had been very cold for several days in succession; but now there was a decided change, though it had not been of sufficient duration to affect the skating, or render the ice in the least degree dangerous.

Cedar Lake was known far and near; and never a pleasant evening or Saturday afternoon passed without bringing its troops of boys and men from all quarters. This winter added a new feature; for fashion was making the pastime popular among ladies, and the little village of Millbrook was not slow in adopting this new order of things.

We had scarcely finished our supper — Charlie and I — before Jennie made her appearance; and with her assistance, the work — what little remained to be done — was soon despatched; and then, after the skates had been duly admired and approved, we set out in high glee for the pond.

"What have you there, Charlie?" I asked, after we had proceeded more than half the distance. "Bottles, plasters. Are you expecting broken limbs to set? I can assure you we haven't the least idea of needing any professional services."

"I hope not, certainly. These are for old Mrs. Benson. I promised to take them to her this evening, and fear she will begin to think I've forgotten her."

"Plague take the old fuss! I don't believe she is any sicker than I am. She always has some new disorder to croak about. Let her go to bed and sleep it off — what she can't sweat off fussing. We want you with us on the ice, and can't spare you, possibly."

"I thought of taking you with me. The house stands but a few feet from the pond, and if we go to it on the ice, it will be just a nice distance for your trial trip."

"I'm afraid she won't have much time to test the virtues of her medicine this evening, if she waits for us to take it to her, and we depend on the skates to take us there," replied Jennie. "I haven't the least idea I can stand alone on them."

"Nor I; but perhaps Charlie will be able to tow us into port. Let us take this path across the field; it is nearer, and will be easier getting on the ice than at the bridge. Hark! I hear them now."

The point was soon reached; a little sheltered cove, on a side of which were some half dozen sleds, brought for the benefit of those who had no skates, or who, from fear, preferred this safer method of conveyance over the glassy surface.

"Come, Fan," exclaimed Jennie, taking my hand, "let's run, and have one good slide while we are able. I wonder where they all are."

"Gone for a race, perhaps; they will soon be back again. Let's get our skates on, and see if we can stand, before they come. O, look! here is Joe's autograph. Pity he couldn't have put that in his writing-book; he'll never be able to show so fair a specimen anywhere else."

"And here are some more," added Charlie; "and there is Mr. Kingsley's, too, just ahead. I must put

mine alongside;" and suiting the action to the word, he buckled on his skates, and soon cut his own name with the others.

"So the 'Master of the Hickory Oil' preparation is in the crowd—is he? I only hope to have the pleasure of seeing him horizontalize his perpendicularity before we go home."

"Will you promise to grant me a favor?" inquired Charlie, who overheard the remark.

"Perhaps I might be induced to. Tell me first what it is."

"That you will treat Mr. Kingsley, if you meet him, with the respect due a teacher from his pupil."

"The subject shall have due consideration."

"I am not joking, Fannie; you must answer me."

"Well, yes, I will try to please you," was answered slowly.

"I can trust your word, when once given; with all your thoughtlessness, you have never deceived me. And now, girls, if you think of paying Mrs. Benson a visit to-night, it is time to be moving; those sleds seem to be in just the right place for our use."

Did you ever try it yourself, reader? We tried singly, and we tried together; but only with the aid of Charlie, could we rise to an erect position. The

sound of voices and laughter warned us of the near approach of some of the party; but not a step forward had we been able to advance.

"Can I relieve you of part of your burden, doctor?"

It was Mr. Kingsley, who had turned aside from the group that were pressing forward to see who would first reach the bridge, a short distance above.

"I think your services would not come amiss. It must be past eight o'clock ere this, and I have promised to visit a patient who lives in the house down there, opposite that group of cedars where you see the light. I proposed to the girls to accompany me; but you see we are not making very rapid progress. If you will excuse me for a short time, I will return as soon as possible."

"I am inclined to favor the first arrangement," replied Mr. Kingsley, taking up the rope attached to the sled on which Jennie had seated herself at his approach, "if we might be allowed to appropriate one of these for a time, and Miss Fannie will take a seat with her friend."

"Thank you for the suggestion. I hadn't thought of that method."

"So it is moved and seconded; if that be your minds," and he turned to us with a look of inquiry.

"Ay, ay," was responded by both.

"'Tis a unanimous vote;" and away we went, slowly followed by the few who had left the bridge, and were returning to meet the others of their party who did not join in the race.

"Will you wait here, or go in?" asked Charlie, when we reached the place.

"I think we will remain here," answered Jennie; "unless Fannie prefers to go with you."

"Not I, indeed; though I would like well enough to see Aunt Mary. But the old lady! the patience of a saint would be overcome, hearing a rehearsal of her ailments. Recollect, Charlie, you are to stay but just ten minutes!"

"And who is Aunt Mary?" inquired Mr. Kingsley.

"O, she is aunt to everybody. Is it possible you have been in Millbrook half the winter, and don't know Aunt Mary? She's an old maid—one of the good kind—who stays here and takes care of an old lady, a Mrs. Benson—Aunt Martha they call her, though she hasn't a relative in the world, as anybody knows. They've lived here alone ever since I can remember. Aunt Martha had a grandson, who used to live with her; but he went to sea a long time

ago, and never came back. Where are you going, Jennie?"

"Going to see what I can do by holding on these bushes along the shore. We ought to be improving the time, if we are to go back on our own runners."

"I might get you each a cane from the cedars there, you would find them quite a help; most of the ladies whom I have met on the ice this evening had a walking-stick of the kind. Excuse me a moment; I will try to return before the doctor's lease expires."

"So now, seems to me some folks cherish a very forgiving disposition."

"Is that you, Joe? How you frightened me! Where have you been all the evening?"

"Where d'ye s'pose I've been?"

"How should I know?"

"How should *you* know?"

"Yes, how?"

"I thought may be Old Hickory might a' told you; you seem to have a pretty correct knowledge of his whereabouts. Ain't gone to whittle another clapper for to-morrow—has he? S'pose you thought I didn't see you when you came down this way with your coach and four."

"Who cares what you saw!" was the angry retort.

"Nobody, as I know of. I didn't say anybody cared. Got your skates on, haven't you? Let's see you stand on 'em. O, you ought to have seen Nance when she tried to go on hers. I thought we should die laughing. She got so mad, she took 'em off and threw 'em into the bushes, and then went home. Won't I plague her a little! Golly, you might heard the ice crack away down to Cedarville. Guess she moved the foundations of the earth that time."

"Now bring that up — will you?"

"Come, now, Fan! I didn't mean nothing; you know I didn't; let's see you skate. I'll bet you can, first rate. Here, let me help you; you shan't fall, true."

"I don't want to; I'm waiting for Charlie."

"Just to pass away the time."

"I tell you I won't!"

"You're afraid to!"

"I ain't, either. What do you think I'm afraid of?"

"'Fraid o' getting hurt. Great skater you'll make; Ain't quite so plucky as you was this afternoon."

"Now bring that up again. I tell you I won't stir off this sled till Charlie comes."

"Well, let me give you a ride then, a little way. I'll come right back when you say so."

"I don't want any ride. I'm going to stay here."

"O, you don't — do you? You needn't feel so grand that you can't go a single team, cause you had a span to fetch you down here. 'Tain't everybody owns a hack that drives one; and John Gilpin and the doctor better see who is hostler next time, before they hitch horses!"

"I don't know as 'tis any of your business how we came here, or how we get back!"

"Didn't say 'twas; but I guess 'tis as much my business as anybody's how and when this gig gets back. So, if you won't get off my sled, why, sit there long as you want to; I'm willing;" and picking up the rope, Joe started at full speed for the place where we had unwittingly confiscated his property.

"Stop, Joe!" I screamed; "you are the very hatefulest, ugliest boy I know of. Let me get off!"

But Joe either did not or would not hear. Without a word or look, he bent every energy to the task, and never once paused till he had deposited the sled where we found it.

"You can skate back if you want to," he said, coolly surveying his freight with a grin of satisfaction; "'twon't take you long."

Too indignant to reply, I began to remove my skates.

"Come, now, I wouldn't do that, if I felt in any hurry about getting back. Not bad-looking runners — are they, though?" picking up the skate I had taken off. "Nance thought hers were somethin' mighty; but they can't hold a candle side o' yourn. Where did you get 'em?"

"None of your business!"

"Don't know any better. That place ain't down in my geography. I'll ask old Hickory to-morrow, if he knows. I s'pose he's been there."

"Give me my skate," I said, rising to my feet.

"What's your hurry? Better learn to use the one you've got, first. I want this, to pay the damages on that sled of mine."

"You give me that skate, you provoking old thief; stand there grinning like a monkey. Wonder who you think will do your examples to-morrow. I won't!"

"Can do 'em myself, if I'm half as spry at 'figgers' as you are at catching fellers," he answered, still facing me, and moving off backward, just fast enough to keep out of my reach. "This ain't a bad gait; we shall get down to Granny Benson's before the ice melts, if we keep along this jog."

"I wish you would tumble down and break your neck."

"You don't say so. Better keep cool; and let your hair curl."

Had I not been angry before, that last remark would have vexed me beyond all endurance. My hair, black as jet, did and would curl as tight to my head as did ever the wool of an African, in spite of all my efforts to straighten it; and Joe's was no less curly, the color being a sandy red.

"Why don't you take it, 'Woolly-oak'?" and he held the skate almost in my face, and then snatched it back just in time to keep it from my grasp.

"I would, if I wasn't afraid of fire, old 'Sorreltop.'"

"Poh! no danger, Fan;" and Joe ran his fingers through his long, tangled, red locks; "not a bit of danger; you're too green to burn. There you go; I thought you'd be off your underpinning if you didn't slacken your speed. Too bad though, any way. Have you hurt you?" The tone was one of anxious inquiry. "I'm real sorry you tumbled down. Here is your skate. I'll run back and get my sled, and draw you down there; 'twon't take but a minute."

I had but just risen to my feet and started forward, determined to reach the place where I left Jennie before he could overtake me, when Charlie came up.

"O, here you are. I left the others down by the Cedars, and came to find you. Jennie told me of your sudden disappearance with Joe. He seems to have left you rather unceremoniously, or you him. How was it?"

"I fell down, and he went back for his sled," I replied, determined that no one should know the result of our late skirmish.

"Will you wait for him?"

"No; the others would only have to wait the longer for us."

"Here, then, let me take your skates. Now stand up straight, keep your feet just even. Don't be frightened; I won't let you fall;" and taking his place back of me, with a hand on each shoulder, we sped swiftly down the pond.

"O, isn't this splendid! ever so much better than the sled. You are just the best propeller on the lake, Charlie. We'll get there long before Joe."

How should I know, among the many who were passing back and forth on either side, that Joe was already far in advance, intent only upon reaching a safe distance beyond the Cedars, where he could turn about, and come up back of them unnoticed?

"So you have brought back our stray lamb, doctor,"

was the first salutation. "What progress, Miss Fannie? Your friend seems to be progressing finely. I think she will be able to enroll her name here on the ice with the others before the season is over;" pointing to a place where were a dozen or more names.

"Put mine alongside Jennie. I'm confident I shall never be able to put it there myself, either this season or ten years from now."

"Ten years! You'll be able to write whole volumes here, before that time expires."

"Never. I'm positive that I can't learn. What do you think about it, Jennie?"

"I was feeling quite encouraged; we ought to make some perceptible improvement in ten years certainly."

"I propose we meet here at that time for a trial of our skill in — what do you call it — skatemanship? Do you accept the challenge? Ten years! Don't forget the date. I will cut it in the bark of this tree. Let me see; that will be January 15, 186—."

"We shan't be very likely to forget it, Fan: that day will make us both twenty-five."

"You ought to make some allowance for former practice," I said, regarding the initials before me, W. T. K., cut with a masterstroke.



"Yes, certainly!"

"What does the 'T.' stand for, Mr. Kingsley, please?" inquired Jennie.

A shade passed over his face; but it vanished in a moment, and he replied, laughing, "'T.' stands for 'trouble,' I believe; does it not?"

"Torment, more like." It came from the other side of the Cedars, muttered in an undertone, which Jennie and I could not fail to recognize.

## CHAPTER IV.

"Poor, lone Hannah,  
Sitting at the window binding shoes,  
Faded, wrinkled,  
Sitting, stitching in a mournful muse.  
Bright-eyed beauty once was she,  
When the bloom was on the tree.  
Spring and winter  
Hannah's at the window binding shoes.

"Twenty winters  
Bleach and tear the rugged shore she views —  
Twenty summers;  
Never one has brought her any news.  
Still her dim eyes silently  
Chase the white sails o'er the sea:  
Hopeless, faithful,  
Hannah's at the window binding shoes."

"ONLY this time, my Mary — just one voyage more;" and Sailor Ben laid down his oar, and, reaching out at arms' length, plucked a pure white lily, and tossed it into the lap of the fair girl opposite him.

"And why *one* more?" she answered, inquiringly,

picking up the lily, and shaking the tiny drops from its pure white petals.

"I have promised, and I cannot break the engagement. When I left the Sea-foam, I gave my word to Captain Grey that I would be back there in one week. We only go to London this time, stopping at France on our return voyage for a part of the cargo. The time will soon pass away, and I shall be here again. I want you to promise me that you will stay with my grandmother while I am gone, in the house I have fitted and furnished for you both. It will be all the dearer to me for knowing who took care of it during my absence."

"*May God forget me when I forget you or yours!*" was the low-spoken answer.

"Bless you, darling, for the words. And now one thing more; 'tis well enough for you to understand it before I leave. If I never come back, Mary, the place will be yours. I have left the deed, and all my other papers, with Squire Ring, who will see that everything is attended to as it should be. We won't talk about it, for I have no doubt I shall be here to attend to it myself; only it is well enough to provide for any emergency."

It was past sunset, but the moon had risen; and the

long train of light lay across the water, reminding one of the child's idea of the bridge on which angels walk to heaven. There were stars, too, overhead; and stars as bright and beautiful looked up from the clear, liquid depths below.

"For every wave, with dimpled face,  
That leaped upon the air,  
Had caught a star in its embrace,  
And held it trembling there."

"Let us turn about, and go up to the Cedars," said Ben, after a while, picking up his oar. "We haven't been there since I came home, and we've been on the lake every pleasant evening. Say, Mary, what are you dreaming about? You haven't spoken for a long time. A lily for your thoughts;" and he tossed the one he held in his hand playfully towards her.

"I hardly know myself. They were so confused I couldn't well put them in words. Let's sing, Ben. I feel strangely nervous to-night. Hark! what was that?"

"Only the bushes brushing against the side of the boat. We will go farther from the shore. I can't have you afraid when I am near to protect you. I shall have to break you of that."

The place denominated "The Cedars" was a little

island, of circular form, not over half a dozen yards in diameter, covered with a thick growth of the trees that gave it its name. The lake might have been thirty rods wide, being of nearly uniform width for a distance of two miles, where was the village of Cedarville; below that place it was a narrow stream, winding its way through field, meadow, and woodland towards the sea.

And there, under the shadow of the trees, where they had so many times before plighted their vows of love and constancy, they pledged themselves anew, and breathed prayers of hope and faith, little dreaming what the future held for them; and Sailor Ben left his native town — left the only two on earth he held dear — and went away — whither?

When the weeks lengthened to months, and months into years, bringing no news but that which Captain Grey brought on his return, — that Ben had left the Sea-foam, and shipped from England to the East Indies, — she ventured to call at Squire Ring's, and make a statement of the facts Ben had communicated to her, before his departure, in regard to the cottage. Nothing satisfactory could be ascertained. He briefly informed her that the place was his, that no deed had ever been given Ben, and all the payment ever made

towards the house was insufficient to cover the rent for the time they had occupied it. He knew nothing of any will, nor had Ben ever confided to him any of his plans.

Ere another twelve months elapsed, the house was sold under the auctioneer's hammer, Captain Grey being the purchaser and taking immediate possession, the Squire pocketing the proceeds; and the two were without a home.

And so we find them, nearly twenty years later, in the old house by the lake, directly opposite, and hardly a stone's throw from, the group of cedars, where she, so long before, pledged her fidelity to him and to his, — find them alone, the aged grandmother, grown nervous, irritable, and fretful, and her devoted friend and protector, the faithful Mary, supporting both by the labor of her hands, doing it gladly, freely, cheerfully, sacrificing everything, and all for the sake of that love for him.

“There are ends more worthy than happiness:

Who seeks it is digging Joy's grave, we know.

The blessed are they who live to bless;

She found out that mystery long ago.”

“May God forget *me* when I forget you or yours!”  
Verily “such have their reward.”

## CHAPTER V.

"Our hands are full of business; let's away:  
 Advantage feeds them fat, while *men* delay."

"GOOD night, Fannie. I hope you have met with sufficient encouragement this evening to warrant another trial to-morrow, if the weather is favorable; and, Jennie, do you stop with your friend to-night;" for she had passed with me through the gate, which Charlie opened while he was speaking.

"My housekeepers! Not every bachelor is so fortunate as to secure the services of two."

"I congratulate you on your success; but how does the 'old saw' read, 'Too many cooks spoil the broth'? I trust you may not be called to witness to the truth of the wisdom therein contained," with mock solemnity.

"I guess not," was the laughing reply. "They both came well recommended; but as the proof of the pudding is in the eating, I won't leave you to testify

to its qualities, with only my judgment to rely on, but ask you to come and try it yourself."

"Thank you for the invitation. I shall most certainly avail myself of the privilege the first convenient season."

"That's right! any time; don't wait for ceremony; it is on your road from school, and you can most always find me in my office at that hour; if not, the room and library are at your service, and while you attend to the intellectual, the girls will look after the temporal wants of us both."

"Thanks again. Good night, all;" and Mr. Kingsley passed on towards his boarding-place, and we entered the house.

"He will come, I know he will, Jennie," said I, when we were alone; "and I don't know any more about housekeeping than a baby. I never had any care of housework, or cooking, in my life. Mrs. Hall came here when I was a little girl, and has lived here ever since. Do you know, — for I shall leave you to manage the whole concern, — you will have to tell me everything to do, and how to do it."

"And stand by you till it is done?"

"Yes, if you want to make sure of it. We must get up early, and get dinner as near ready as possible before

we go to school; and then we can leave the table standing till we get home at night, and one of us wash dishes while the other gets supper."

"We might ask Mr. Kingsley to excuse us every day at eleven o'clock while we do the work. We haven't any lessons to recite after that time."

"He wouldn't let us, he is so contrary. Wait till tomorrow, and see if you can touch 'his majesty' with a 'ten foot pole.'"

"I will ask him myself if your brother approves of the plan," and as Charlie made no objection, Jennie broached the subject next day at recess, receiving an affirmative answer.

For the first time in his life Joe was thrown on his own resources. How he ever accomplished the task without help was a mystery; but at the hour for recitation, every example was solved correctly, and, encouraged by his success, he continued to work out his problems the remainder of the term, depending on his own exertions instead of the mental efforts of his friends.

"Don't let that pudding burn, if I am to sit on the jury." The caution was uttered in a voice too low to be understood by any one except us, to whom it was addressed. Not one in the school-room, who saw Mr.

Kingsley at the time, would have guessed the subject of his remark was other than what concerned our school duties. His face was as unreadable as the sphinx, and never judge regarded the culprit before him, whose sentence he was reading, with a more serious expression than he regarded us till we left the room and the door was closed between us.

In the afternoon of the same day Jennie and I had laid aside our books and wrappings after our return from school, and gone to the kitchen to attend to our culinary duties, when the door of the office opened, and some one entered.

Thinking it Charlie, or some patient sent there to wait for him, we continued our work, paying no attention to the near proximity of our neighbor.

Jennie was sifting flour at the table preparatory to making biscuit for tea, while I was dividing my attention between the dishes used at noon, which occupied a side of the same table, and the dish-water, which obstinately refused to grow a bit warmer in spite of all my efforts.

"Chelin's System of Surgery, Cole's Philosophy of Health, Williams's Practical Treatise of one thing, Watson's Preaching on another — I've devoured them bodily, every book in the doctor's case; got the whole

of them at my tongue's end, and am here for further instruction. Don't let me interfere with your usual arrangements, but set me to work."

"So 'twas you we heard. We thought it was brother Charlie. I was wondering what could detain him so long, and thinking it about time for him to come out here."

"Well, I've come as substitute during his absence. What part of the programme do you leave him? I'll try to make his place good till he arrives." He had come towards the stove, and was standing opposite me while he was speaking.

"If you are in a hurry for that water to boil, you mustn't stand there and watch it. 'Watched pot never boils,' you know. This is what you need most;" and picking up a basket from the wood-box, he started out in the direction of the wood-shed, singing as he went, —

"The cook she watched the pot the while,  
And I picked chips to make it 'bile.'"

"Hasn't he just as many sides as a round rail!" laughed Jennie, after he had gone out and closed the door. "Who would think that was the dignified teacher we left in the school-room half an hour ago?"

"I haven't forgotten 'tis the same one I left there last night. He gave me occasion to remember him then that I shan't be likely to forget very soon. I hope Charlie will come before long. I don't know how we are to dispose of him till we get supper ready."

"He seems already disposed of, I think."

"Yes; and his presence doesn't interfere with your arrangements in the least. You stand there as unconcerned, whisking around the dough, as if nothing was the matter. If he is going to stay here looking on while I wash these dishes, they won't be done to-night."

"I'm used to having half a dozen pairs of eyes peering at me from all directions, while I'm about my work at home."

"I should go crazy! Hark! there comes the wood-pile."

"Here is what will do it;" and Mr. Kingsley deposited his basket beside the stove, and began putting in the chips. "What is the next operation?"

"To watch this bread," replied Jennie, starting with it towards the oven, "if you are intending to burn all those at once."

"O, I beg pardon. Come, Fannie, we will proceed to business. See, our united efforts have brought the

dish-water up to two hundred and twelve degrees already. Will any one be kind enough to inform me whether this is Joe's property?" He had found an apron, and was tying it on. "This looks like the dish-towel; and now, if I'm armed and equipped as the law directs, you may pass over the dishes as fast as you please."

So, laughing and chatting all the while, we continued our work till the dishes were nearly completed, Jennie putting them in their places meanwhile, and bringing others to be washed as she found them.

"You can throw that away, and let me have the plate again," said I, pushing towards her some pudding that was left at dinner the day before.

"Not till the case has been submitted to the jury. That's hardly fair, after appointing me to judge of its excellences. Please, may I be dismissed?" and seizing it, he mounted a high stool the opposite side of the room, a veritable Jack Horner. At the same moment Charlie came in from the stable.

"So here are my housekeepers, busy as bees. I should have come home earlier to assist you, but was unavoidably detained."

"The 'proof of the pudding is in the eating. If you

can't rely upon my judgment, come and try it yourself.' I think that was the way the invitation ran, doctor."

"Just so. Am glad to see you."

"My landlady was going out of town to-day; so I availed myself of the first opportunity, as I assured you of doing last night;" and he slid down from his elevated position, and came forward. "This for you," putting the empty plate in the dish-water before me, "and that for you," tossing the apron over Jennie's head. "Come, doctor, I've tormented them long enough; let's leave them to their own devices;" and he led the way from the kitchen, followed by Charlie, cautioning us both, before he closed the door, to attend faithfully to that bread, and let him know if any more chips were needed.

## CHAPTER VI.

*"What they say? Why, let them say it.  
Airy echo, fleet as dew,  
When they've breathed it 'tis forgotten;  
They who hear forget it too."*

LATER in the evening, after everything had been put in order, we repaired once more to the lake for a second trial.

Nancy had so far recovered her usual tone of mind as to seek out the offending skates from the bushes where she left them the evening previous, and with her most intimate friend, Anna Ring, was endeavoring to balance herself by holding on the overhanging branches of the trees that skirted the shore.

"You've got to the end of navigation now," remarked Joe, who, with several others, stood watching their slow progress. "You'll have to skate on your intellect, Nance" (she prided herself on the possession of an unusually brilliant one), "or else wait for a tree to grow there. You can't reach that hemlock by any stretch of imagination. Steady now." But Joe's cau-

tion, given in a tone of raillery, only irritated and vexed, as he intended it should do; and she would have fallen had not Mr. Kingsley, seeing at a glance how matters stood, gone to her aid.

Quick as thought Joe hastened for his sled, and bringing it to the place where I was standing, gallantly offered it and his own services.

The philosophical principle that "bodies which are quick in heating are quick in cooling" is not confined to material objects; and my wrath against Joe, so suddenly kindled the night before, was quite as easily extinguished. *That* was not our first quarrel. We had always indulged in these outbreaks, they being of almost daily occurrence whenever the school-term brought us together; but morning seldom came without bringing overtures from Joe, who seemed always to regard himself as the first offender.

So, peace declared, I gladly availed myself of his offered aid and the use of his sled, leaving brother Charlie with Jennie, to whom he rendered similar service.

For an hour and more I gave myself wholly to the practice that called us there, and thanks to Joe's instruction, progressed beyond my most sanguine expectations.



"You are getting all tired out, Fan; better sit down on my sled, and rest a while." We were near the group of cedars.

"I will, if you'll promise not to run away with me. I got down here on my own skates, and am determined to get back in the same way. Where do you suppose Jennie and Charlie are? I haven't seen them since I first got here, or Mr. Kingsley either."

"I heard the doctor's voice not long ago; dunno anything about Old Hickory, and don't want to, darn his picter!"

"Nancy got over her trouble pretty quick. I thought she wouldn't be here again this winter."

"Catch Nance staying at home when there's anything to call her out with the Rings. I hope she'll see through 'em some time, but she ain't got wit enough yet. She would believe every word they told her if they said the moon was made of green cheese. There's nothing they don't stuff her up with, and she is just fool enough to swallow the whole of it. Pity she couldn't see 'em, and hear what they have to say about her, soon as her back is turned. I hate the whole tribe of 'em, children and grandchildren, from old Squire Josh and his wife Hannah clear down to the youngest."

"Why, what have they ever done to you?"

"What haven't they done and said about everybody and everything in Millbrook? Didn't they lie to Jim Strong about his folks till he cleared out and left them? Ain't they picked old Tim Ryan till he is poor as a church mouse, getting him half drunk, and then playing cards till he's gambled away every copper? And there's Jennie's father. I know just how 'tis, but she would never say a word, and her mother ain't got pluck enough, or wit either, to do anything; but they are both always driving to it, fitting shoes; much good it does 'em. Old Brown carries the work home, and old Josh stands ready with some tool to sell to him that ain't good for anything to anybody. Much money they pay out for work! Then you know the house Jennie's uncle, the captain, bought, — the one they live in now, — everybody that dared speak their mind said it ought to belong to Granny Benson, for that sailor of hers that was lost at sea told ever so many, the last time he came home, that he had bought it of Josh Ring; but the old sinner held on till he was pretty sure Ben would never come back to claim it, and then sold it, and kept the money. I hate 'em, the whole tribe; and what's more, I ain't afraid to tell 'em so."

"Who told you about Captain Grey's house? I never heard of that before."

"O, lots of folks. I've heard it hinted back and forth a dozen times; so I put the whole together, and that's what I made out of it. Anna is just like them — a regular chip of the old block; she's always up to some kind of a caper to school. I love to throw out at her once in a while, she feels so all-fired grand. Nothing makes Nance so mad as to say a word about any of them. Does me good to see such folks come up with once in a while."

"How do you know but some of them are in hearing now, Joe?"

"I don't care if they are; truth will bear its weight, I guess. Did I ever tell you how Ned Brier and I played it on them last fall? You know that low, swampy place, side of the lake, about a mile below here; there's a path through it that folks take when they go afoot down to Cedarville. Sam Ring and his brother — Anna's father — were coming up through there one night just at dusk. Sam had been down to get his gun, that he had been having mended there. Ned and I heard 'em coming; so we hid in the bushes. There's nothing living that Ned can't mimic; so just as they got off against us, he began to make a noise like a flock of geese; there were lots of them going over

about that time. 'Quick, Sam,' says John, 'load your gun; there's a flock of geese lit in the lake.' While he was doing that, Ned and I crept around behind that little frog-pond t'other side of the swamp, and by the time they got to the first place, he set up his squawking over there. 'Run quick,' said John; 'they're gone into the frog pond. You can get a good shot if they don't fly before you get there.' So they went tearing through the bushes, both of them. By the time they got to the frog-pond, the geese were back to the other place again. So we kept them running, till finally Sam brought up side of the lake, where somebody had left some decoys in the water; and without stopping to notice the difference, he let drive right amongst them, shivering the whole lot all to splinters. I thought Ned and I should die laughing. We waited till they were out of hearing, and then went home. We never said a word about it for a long time, till one night both of us happened to be in the store. Sam was back of the counter, telling his great yarns, and began to brag what he did once down to the shore, telling how many geese he brought down at one shot, and I couldn't keep still any longer; so I gave Ned a poke, and says I, 'Sam, did you kill as many as you did on the lake that

night you and John were coming up from Cedarville?' You ought to have heard him swear! I thought he would take the roof right off that night!"

"Aren't you afraid they'll pay you back some time, Joe?"

"'Fraid! no. I don't care a darn what they do. Let 'em try it; that's all. I saw the old woman last night, — she's captain and all hands when she sets out, — and she run on a great rig about Old Hickory because he kept us after school. She called him everything, and said she knew we weren't to blame. Nance would a' swallowed the whole on't, but I took it for about what 'twas worth. When she sees him, she will put it the other way about, and say we deserved it. I know her; but it's all the same with me, whichever way she has it. I shall hate Old Hickory just the same. He can't come blarneying around me. I shan't ever like him any better than I do now."

He did, however, as I felt confident he would, though I had no idea how the friendship was to be established between them.

That same evening, not a half hour later, we had halted near the shore for him to get me a cane, when Mr. Kingsley, with Charlie and Jennie, came along, and stopped at the same place.

There had been a light fall of snow a few days before the lake froze over, which was not yet melted in the woods; and while we stood waiting for Joe, Mr. Kingsley called our attention to the tracks in it, made by a fox, at the same time expressing a wish that he knew somebody who owned a dog that was used to that kind of business.

"I have one," exclaimed Joe, forgetting everything at the moment but his love for hunting.

And so it was settled, there and then, that the two, with Joe's dog, should spend the following Saturday in the woods.

I was assured by the quiet smile with which Mr. Kingsley met his proposal that he had been a listener, either purposely or accidentally, to a part, if not all, of his remarks before we left the Cedars.

Be that as it may, the day was won, and woe to the man, woman, or child who, after that time, ventured aught against our teacher in Joe's presence.

## CHAPTER VII.

"I pant for the music that is divine;  
 My heart in its thirst is a dying flower;  
 Pour forth the sound like enchanted wine,  
 Loosen the notes in a golden shower."

IT was a mystery to everybody who knew us, — a mystery even to ourselves. What strange affinity could have drawn two together so totally unlike in every respect as Jennie and myself? Not only was there a wide dissimilarity in our dispositions, but our tastes were widely different.

Jennie's love of books and study was as great as my dislike of the same, and her intense love of music amounted to almost a passion. To excel in that was the goal of her ambition; for that no sacrifice was deemed too great, no task too laborious; for it she was willing to toil early and late; but the compensation for her labor availed little, where there were so many other wants, compared with the least of which hers were deemed of only secondary importance.

Possessed of no such talent themselves, how could they understand or appreciate it in another?

Joe had not gone wide of the truth in regard to the way old Squire Ring managed to pay his workwomen, whenever the business could be transacted and settlements made with the 'weaker vessel,' as was the case here.

Mr. Brown had moved to Millbrook when Jennie was in her sixth year. Until that time the family resided in Boston, or the immediate vicinity, he being engaged, so far as his limited means would allow, in the cattle trade.

With others in the same line of business he would go to New York, or, if the inducements were sufficient, even farther west, select his stock, and return with his purchase on foot. Afterwards, when railroads made freighting a more available method of transportation, he gave up the business, which had never proved to him a very profitable one, and at the earnest solicitation of his brother-in-law, Captain Grey, moved to the cottage, which had been purchased of Squire Ring, when years had rendered improbable the return of Sailor Ben.

It was while he was absent from home, on a tour through the interior of New York, that Jennie was

born. Had he returned to find a son, he would have regarded the babe with far greater favor; but girls were his special abhorrence.

"Only a girl! Girls ain't good for nothing!" and this was all the welcome he gave the little stranger.

Not so his wife. The babe was to her a never-failing comfort in every hour, and what it lacked in love from him was amply compensated by her devotion; but from that time her health was on the wane. The skill of no physician seemed to meet her case; they all united in calling it a nervous disease of some sort, but were unable to trace it to any direct source.

"She suffers far less in body than in mind," was the remark of the old doctor, who came to fill the place of our father, before Charlie finished his medical course, and came home to take up the burden himself. But whatever was the cause of her disquietude, she guarded the secret well, and when Jennie was seven years old, laid down her cross for the victor's crown.

It was when Jennie was left alone, to mourn over this great loss, that we became acquainted; and the mutual attachment sprang up between us which years and further acquaintance but served to strengthen.

The possessions of each were shared in common, and seldom a day passed without bringing us together. We

had no secrets from each other; and so I became possessed of the knowledge of what she regarded her choicest treasure — the *seal* which had later been the indirect cause of my punishment at the hand of Mr. Kingsley.

It was given her by her mother, she told me, the day she died. They were alone at the time, and Mrs. Brown had drawn it from its place of concealment under her pillow, and was about to make some remark relative to it, when the entrance of her husband prevented further conversation in regard to it. The startled look and appealing glance from one to the other were sufficient to make her understand, child though she was, that the story, whatever it might be, was not intended for the ears of a third party; and so we two, the only persons in the world who knew of its existence, guarded well the secret, which was to us no less a mystery than had been the cause of that mental malady which brought Mrs. Brown to a premature grave.

Immediately after the death of his wife, Mr. Brown engaged as housekeeper a lady residing in Cedarville, and before the end of the year married her, to the great displeasure of the captain, who had made his home with his sister whenever he was on the land.

Possessed of no enviable disposition, his presence would have been far from agreeable to the second Mrs. Brown; but fortunately for all, after repeated threats of turning them all out of his house, he wisely concluded to leave it himself, and forthwith moved his possessions to a little shop that occupied a corner at the end of the garden.

There he spent the remainder of his days, receiving no visitors, except on business, and suffering no one to intrude into his presence except Jennie, who made daily visits to Uncle Jack's den, going and coming at her own pleasure. Whether or not her presence there was agreeable, he never denied her admittance, though among all the brothers, who afterwards came to multiply her cares, was not one possessed of sufficient courage to trespass on the premises.

It was a matter of no small conjecture among the people of Millbrook whether Captain Grey's pecuniary means were limited or extensive. That he owned the place occupied by his brother-in-law was an undeniable fact; but beyond that, nothing satisfactory could be ascertained, he guarding with a jealous care his own domicile, and wisely keeping his own counsel.

By hoarding all her spending money, — no liberal allowance, — Jennie saved enough, after long years, to

purchase a second-hand guitar; and with no aid but the book given her with it, and her own native talent, she set herself to work. But, alas for the realization of her dreams! going to her room one day, after her return from school, she found its place vacant, and, on inquiry, ascertained that it had been exchanged at the store for some useless farmer's implement.

Too indignant for words, she flew to Uncle Jack's den, and gave way to her wrath and disappointment in a wild fit of weeping. Not so Captain Grey. Days after, when he had drawn from her the cause of so unusual excitement, he poured forth the whole violence of his wrath on the head of the offender, declaring he would burn the house down if anything that belonged to Jennie was meddled with in the future.

Some weeks later she was not a little surprised, on going to pay Uncle Jack a visit, to find in a corner of his den a piano. How or when it was purchased she never knew.

It was a year later that brother Charlie's proposal in regard to an exchange of housekeepers brought us for the time under one roof, the happy sharers of a mutual burden.

Our second experiment on the ice proved a shorter,

as well as a more successful one, and the hour of eight found us back at the door of brother Charlie's office.

"We shall find it warmer in the sitting-room, Mr. Kingsley," said I, opening the door. "I suppose you are not afraid of the dark. I will bring in the lights presently;" and while I went to get them, Jennie groped her way across the room for a chair, which she placed for him before the fire.

"Thanks; I will take this one, if you please." He had stumbled against the music-stool. "This is a treat I have not been used to since I came to Millbrook;" and sitting down to the piano, he ran his fingers lightly over the keys, wooing a simple prelude to his song. Nature had endowed him with a voice of ravishing sweetness, and the clear, rich tones flowed and floated around him in one wave of exquisite harmony. Jennie stood like one entranced; she had never heard anything like it before. The old, familiar tunes, repeated again and again by the choir in our church, of which she was a member, comprised nearly all the musical talent of which Millbrook could boast.

"Well, Jennie, have you got back again?" said I, when Mr. Kingsley left the piano, and took the seat offered him at first.

She looked at me in a bewildered way for a moment before she answered.

"O, Fannie, I thought it was heaven."

"Well, I'm very glad you've got back, for I don't want you to go there until you can take me with you."

"And are we to have no more music?" inquired Charlie, coming in. He had been to see if any orders were left during his absence. "I lost the greater part of that."

"Certainly, I hope so. What say, Fannie? You must contribute your part towards the entertainment."

"My part! Jennie would take a tour to the other region. That's all out of my line. Charlie made a stir about it once, and had a music teacher here a few times; but he wisely concluded it was no use. Wish I could play; but the practice is too much like work. Jennie will help you; she's full of music."

"Don't ask me. I know nothing except what I have taught myself. But please play some more for us."

"Will you sing, all of you?" and he went back to the piano.

Jennie's fine contralto harmonized perfectly with Mr. Kingsley's tenor. He turned to her with no little surprise when they ceased.

"No teacher, did you say? How do you expect to answer for the improvement of your ten talents?" He repented for having put the question at the next instant. "Pardon me, Jennie; but I tell you truly when I say you have a fortune in your voice, if you choose to put it to that use."

"It isn't that I care for; but I've always wanted to study music. I hope to, some time."

"And why not now? It would give me the greatest pleasure to teach you what I know of it myself."

"Let the lessons be given here. It may help rouse my sister's ambition, if she and Jennie study together."

I knew what kindly forethought of brother Charlie's prompted the suggestion. For whether Uncle Jack would have consented to the lease of his den twice a week was a doubtful question. For Jennie's sake I acquiesced in the plan; and never was man's patience more thoroughly tried. He had no large share to begin with, and my imperfect lessons, had they counted with those of the day school, would have met with summary punishment. As it was, he frowned and scolded; and whenever the absence of Charlie rendered it comparatively safe for me to do so, I answered him in his own coin.

Jennie did not leave school. Before two weeks passed the little one was not, for God took him.

A few days later, Mrs. Hall returned, and Jennie went back to resume her old position, and take up the old burden.

I missed her sadly, though we were parted only by the width of the yards that surrounded the two dwellings. And Charlie — a new light was in his eyes I had never seen there before, and down, far down in his heart, another image enshrined, and a hope, a faint hope, to the realization of which he hardly dared look forward.



## CHAPTER VIII.

"Blush to be branded with  
The slanderer's name;  
And though thou dread'st not sin,  
At least dread shame."

"**H**ERE comes the professor!"

We were gathered on the sunny side of the school-house, waiting the hour for school to begin. At the words, all looked up expectant, many starting towards the door; but, seeing Joe enter the yard alone, there was a general fall-back, and we turned inquiringly towards the speaker, Anna Ring.

"Why don't you take off your hats, boys, and receive him with the respect his newly-acquired dignity deserves? We of the first class ought to feel highly honored with such an accession to our number."

Joe had been promoted the day before to a higher class in arithmetic.

"I say, Joe, when do you leave for college?"

The taunt expressed in the tone was understood,

though the remarks preceding the inquiry were lost; and he coolly replied, —

"About the time geese begin to fly, I reckon."

There was a loud laugh, for the story of Joe's and Ned's exploit in the swamp by Cedar Lake had come to be a public affair.

"O, you needn't be so huffy about it. I am anxious to know how you intend to meet the expense; that's all. I suppose that ten-cent piece you 'sold yourself' for last week will carry you through the first year."

"If it don't, I can pick somebody's pocket; plenty of chances any day."

"And quite as honorable as some other ways, Joe," for that last slur included me as well; "you might put your property into somebody else's hands, and fail up a few times, or buy some cholera hogs, and sell the meat for best quality," coming direct to the point, in my usual abrupt manner.

"Dear me! I wonder whose little lamb has blar-r-r-ted now! You needn't turn up your nose, Fan Wilbur; it's short enough already, the Lord knows, and you can't well afford to lose any of it."

"I'm glad of it; it won't be forever poking into other folks' business."

"Come, Fannie;" and Jennie drew my arm through hers, and would have led me away, but I refused.

"Yes, that's right — take the doctor's pet away, and smooth down her ruffled feathers. She shan't be abused — no, she shan't."

"I can take care of myself, Anna Ring; when I want your advice, I'll let you know."

"O, will you? I was afraid you might be bashful about it. You mustn't let your angry passions rise; you might get into trouble, and have to stop after school again. Girls, what do you think about it? — would Mr. Kingsley hurt the doctor's little lamb now?"

"If *some* folks would hold their tongues, nobody would know they were fools."

"Hear Jo-sephus! He is bound to stand by the ship, live or die, sink or swim. O, did you know? — there was an elopement last week, up by Granny Benson's. A young man was seen going up stream at a furious rate, taking his idol on a hand-sled. Genuine, disinterested affection!"

"Do come, Fannie — please do!" and Jennie tried once more to draw me from the scene.

"Why don't you go with her? You'll get hurt if you stay here with the rest of us. Jennie will spread

her righteous wings right over you, and deliver you up to the doctor safe and sound. You might go down street, and meet the schoolmaster; he's coming now. Joe, why don't you take your sled and go, too? I'll get up any time you want it."

The school-house was on the brow of a long, steep hill, and the boys always brought their sleds whenever there was sufficient snow for coasting.

"Look here, Anna Ring!" and Joe went around to the place where she had seated herself upon his sled, and, giving it a tremendous push, sent it over the brow of the hill, at the same moment the bell rang for school to begin.

"Five definitions for every minute late without an excuse!" he shouted; "better stop and write one when you get there!" But Anna was out of hearing; nor did she stop till the sled reached the foot of the hill, when, powerless from her position to guide it, she brought up against a large clump of bushes.

Ten minutes later she entered the school-room, and, as no excuse was left at the desk, the fifty definitions had to pay the delinquency after school.

There were not a few shy glances exchanged between Joe and myself during the day. Never was Anna

Ring more industrious. Not a leisure moment but she spent poring over her dictionary, and the last one was committed to memory long before the hour for dismissal. The close of the term was drawing near, and this was the first time anything had taken place to detain her later than the usual hour; and she felt it keenly, but it was only her pride that suffered.

Her mother had told her at noon — the other members of the family joining with her — that she should not stop, since her tardiness was no fault of hers, pouring every invective upon Joe and the schoolmaster that her fruitful imagination could conceive; and, though Anna resolutely set herself to the task of learning the definitions, knowing how much she would have to contend with if she dared defy Mr. Kingsley's authority, she was fully resolved never to recite them, and kept her seat without a word when he called for the recitation.

"Very well, remain there as long as you please; and when you weary of the self-imposed punishment, you can sue to me for favor. I have asked you the last time."

An hour later there was a rap at the door, and a timid voice said, —

"Mrs. Ring wants to know, will you dismiss Anna? She wants her at home."

Another half hour's silence, and another rap.

"Mother says you are to let Anna come right home; supper's ready!" To which Mr. Kingsley deigned no answer.

A third soon followed.

"Mother says if you don't let Anna come right straight home, she will come herself and see about it! Why don't you come along, sis?" (The lad caught a glimpse of her through the half-opened door, sitting erect, with arms folded, and the offending dictionary lying closed upon the desk before her.) "Mother wants you to wash the dishes."

"If you have anything to say to me, I am at your service; but I would prefer you not to address any in my charge without permission. Tell Mrs. Ring, if her dishes are suffering, I shall be most happy to assist her in that line."

The boy left in a rage, muttering to himself, but soon returned with the message that "his services were not needed at their house, but perhaps he could get a job by making application at the doctor's."

Then there was another interval of quiet. It was

long past sunset, and only the faint light from the open furnace rendered the objects in the room visible. Not a word had passed between teacher and pupil since the first, and the prospect seemed favorable for a whole night of it.

Presently the door opened, and without ceremony the elder Mrs. Ring entered, and confronted the school-master.

"Pretty business this!" she ejaculated; "very fine for a young gentleman who calls himself respectable! What in the world are you here for, Anna, sitting like a post, at this time of night? Why don't you go home, as your mother told you to, and let this sprig, who is passing himself for a gentleman among decent people, take himself off when he gets ready? Start along now! And you" (turning again to Mr. Kingsley) — "next time you want somebody to sit up with, send for me, and I shall be most happy to come and keep company with you!"

Then Mr. Kingsley found his voice, then he was grandly indignant. With a face livid with rage, and eyes like burning coals, he turned to her, and poured forth all the irony and scorn of which he was capable. It was the first time he had ever been charged with a

questionable reputation; and the accusation, unjust to the last degree, stung him to the quick.

Old Hannah Ring had found her match at last. With the little respect he might previously have entertained for the old lady rooted out entirely, — for he read her aright at the first, — and knowing no such word as *fear* in all his vocabulary, he turned like a lion at bay, and met all her slanderous reproaches with a weapon of her own kind. Without pausing to take breath, or give her a chance to reply, he had his say to the very last; and when he ceased, it would have been difficult to tell which of the three faces before the blazing coals of the furnace was whitest, for Anna, book in hand, stood before the others.

An instant the old lady raised her eyes to his, but quailed before the glance she met, then, without another word, turned and left the room. Mr. Kingsley's shaft had struck home. Not another in all Millbrook would have had the courage to hold up to her view her true character; perhaps no other could have portrayed it so faithfully.

Not till the last sound of her retreating steps died away did Anna gather sufficient courage to hand him the book she held.

He received it in silence, and waited further overtures.

"Will you please hear the definitions now?" spoken somewhat hesitatingly.

Then the old look came back, and he turned to the place designated.

"Richard was himself again!"

## CHAPTER IX.

"Revile him not; the tempter hath  
A snare for all;  
And pitying tears, not scorn and wrath,  
Befit his fall."

**T**HREE weeks later the school-term closed, and Mr. Kingsley left Millbrook.

He had come to the place a stranger, not one knowing his native town, and the few who cared to ascertain merely to satisfy curiosity received only evasive answers.

Old Hannah Ring tried more than once, using every artifice her ingenuity could invent, displaying a tact that would have done credit to any naval officer; but she stormed the fort in vain.

He met all her queries and flattery with the same sarcastic smile which would the first time have silenced any one less persevering than herself.

He made but few friends among those of his own age; perhaps cared for less, for his distrust of every-

thing, whether material or spiritual, led him to regard with suspicion any advancement towards intimacy.

Some there were who thought the name he gave an assumed one; others, that he had reversed their order, the one given being a middle name, and the letter "T" the initial of the surname. And so he went, as he came, unknown, but not forgotten; and when the weeks changed to months, and months to years, we began to look forward, — Jennie and I, — and count those which must still elapse before the evening would come which was to bring us again together on the lake near the Cedars.

It was early autumn of the third year following. We had been sitting together in the doorway, studying the morrow's lessons, — both being pupils in the academy at Cedarville, — when Jennie suddenly threw aside her books, and, with the remark that she must go right home, and practise her music before Uncle Jack came, started across the garden in the direction of his den. She was gone but a few moments, then returned breathless with running, and without a word, rushed past me into the office.

"O, doctor, do come quick! Uncle Jack — I fear he is dying. Please make haste;" and before he could answer she was gone.

Taking what first came to hand likely to be of service in so sudden an emergency, he followed.

Captain Grey was lying upon the floor, where it appeared he had fallen, unconscious of anything around him, and talking in that incoherent way which betokens a sudden and serious illness.

"You have no idea how long he has been in this state?"

"No; he appeared as usual this morning, but complained yesterday. He spent most of the day writing, but went out in the evening in the storm. I haven't been here since I came from school, till now. Is he very ill?"

"We must put him on the bed before I can make any examination of the nature of the attack. His present position adds greatly to his sufferings. Perhaps you had better call some one to assist me. Your father —"

"He is not at home. I can help you. I think Uncle Jack would be better satisfied if he knew;" and she paused suddenly.

Seeing her unwillingness to admit any one to the room from the house, Charlie ceased to urge the matter; and with no little difficulty they succeeded in placing him on the bed.

"Port your helm! Port your helm! I say, are you all deaf there? Lower that boat!"

"He thinks he is at sea," whispered Jennie.

"At sea — lost at sea, did you say? I tell you he is not lost. O, there he goes; he is overboard; but I didn't do it. I tell you I didn't do it. Will no one go to the rescue? Lower that boat, I say! Will you stand like dogs, and see your mate drown before your eyes? No, I didn't push him over. Will no one go to the rescue? Enough! I go alone; hold on, mate. I'm coming, Ben! coming! coming!"

"O, this is dreadful! Uncle Jack, don't you know me — Jennie?"

"Yes, it is she — it is she! Why do you turn away so coldly? I am guilty! guilty! but I didn't do that. I tell you I didn't do that; but I would have done anything, everything, to obtain favor in your sight. I would have sold myself, body and soul, for one brief hour of such happiness as your love could have bestowed, and you denied it. O God! that I should have suffered a whole lifetime, and all for nought — for nought! But I loved you, Mary — I loved you."

"What is he saying? What does he mean?" and Jennie's ghastly face was raised to the doctor's for a

moment. "Can you do something for him? Will nothing help him?"

"Poor child, this is too much for you. You must let me call some one; he will suffer for care if you refuse it?"

"No; don't call anybody — not yet. I shall get over it in a minute; but it came so sudden. I can take care of him, only tell me what to do. I will do anything you say; but don't let anybody else come here."

"Why not? You can't take care of him alone. He may be sick a week, requiring constant attention day and night."

"Wait till he is rational, then. O, he feared this so much! I promised him long ago I wouldn't let anybody see him but you, if the time did come. Everything, the slightest illness, always affected his head; and he was so afraid he might say something to be sorry for! I knew there was something on his mind to trouble him, but I never dreamed of this. You won't let anybody come, doctor! Only say you won't. Poor Uncle Jack!" and Jennie seized both Charlie's hands, and bowing her head upon them, burst into tears.

A little while he waited in silence; then, when her

grief had somewhat subsided, and the sobs became less frequent, he led her to a seat.

"There, there, child; you mustn't give way so; try to calm yourself, and tell me all about it, — what your uncle complained of yesterday, and how he looked, — and we'll try to have him all right in the morning."

So soothing her as he might a tired child, he drew from her all that she knew of his indisposition.

"Has he been exposed to any contagious disease? Has he been away from Millbrook lately?"

"He went to Boston the week before last, but didn't say to what part of the city, or what called him there. He was gone several days."

Quick as thought Charlie stepped to the side of his patient. Captain Gray was lying on one side, his mouth open, breathing heavily. The powerful anodyne was beginning to take effect. Turning his head towards the light, he made a hasty examination of his mouth and throat, so far as could be without disturbing him, then, opening the shirt collar, sought a further confirmation of his worst fears, and turned again to Jennie.

"You must leave him. I will see that he does not suffer; but I can't have you in the room a moment longer. 'Tis for your own safety I urge this haste."

"My safety? I am not afraid of him. See how quiet he is now; indeed, I cannot, I will not leave him, whatever happens. Dear Uncle Jack, he trusted me always, and I won't desert him now."

"Not that, not that, Jennie. I think he will know you when he wakes. He has had something to excite him. He will get over that; but your uncle—I fear he has the small-pox."

"The small-pox, doctor? Do you think he will die? Can nothing be done for him?"

"I will do all I can; but don't stay here longer. I will get somebody to take care of him — any one you say; and now go away, if you would not have two sick ones on my hands, and expose the rest of your family to greater danger."

"Would you have me break the promise made him years ago? You are too true to your friends to urge me to be unfaithful to mine; but if I knew my life depended upon it, I would not leave him. I'm glad father is not coming back this week."

"Come back! Did you say he was coming back? Don't let him in here. Bar the door quick! There he is at the window. Don't let him in. I say he shan't come near me. Jennie, you promised me — you promised —" The last words were scarcely audible.



"Do you think I would leave him now, doctor? Not for worlds. I can do alone for a time; but you will not ask me again to leave him?"

"No, Jennie; your work is here. God bless and sustain you;" and he grasped her hand. "Forgive me if I spoke hastily. 'Twas for your safety I urged it; perhaps my motive was selfish; the heart will cry out sometimes." He stopped suddenly, and pressing again the hand he held, left the room.

Half an hour later, having made all necessary arrangements at home, he went back to assist Jennie in the care of his patient during the night, first telling Mrs. Brown, and cautioning her not to expose herself or the children unnecessarily. Weak in body and mind, Jennie never suffered a moment's anxiety in regard to her step-mother, knowing that it would be the easiest thing in the world to keep her out of sight and out of hearing.

"I've come back again. Did it seem a long time you were left alone? How is the captain?"

"Quiet. He hasn't spoken since you went away; he seemed easy, so I came out here for fresh air. I'm not afraid, but I will try to take every precaution for the sake of my friends."

"That is right, and I am going to suggest another, which I think you have not thought of. You see I have come prepared;" and he drew forth a small package.

"What are you going to do? Why, doctor, I was vaccinated long ago — before I can remember. I can show you the scar now."

"Yes, I suppose so; but it won't do any harm. I shall feel better satisfied, knowing we didn't neglect it. So be good, and pay me for granting your wishes by gratifying mine. By the way, Fannie sent more messages than I could bring. She wanted to come right over here, and I didn't know but she would for all I could do to stop her. You can guess what frame of mind I left her in."

"Dear Fan, tell her I would trust her in everything; but she musn't expose herself when there is no need."

There were intervals of quiet the night through, then hours in which the sufferer seemed in an agony of torment, during which times he raved in a perfect paroxysm of frenzy.

Morning found him sleeping; and, embracing the first opportunity, Charlie left them, promising to look in every hour.

"Jennie, is that you?"

"What is it, Uncle Jack? Yes, I am here."

"Where am I?"

"In your own bed. You have been sick."

"Sick, did you say? No, I'm not sick; but I dreamed I was. How long have I been here?"

"Two days. Are you feeling better?" and she took one of his hands.

"Yes, I'm well now; but I don't quite understand. Are we alone? Is no one in hearing?"

"There is no one here. What is it?"

"Are you sure?" and his eyes wandered searchingly about the room. "You are not deceiving me?"

"Did you ever know me to tell you a lie, Uncle Jack?"

"What has been the matter?"

"The doctor will be in soon, and tell you all about it. Go to sleep now, and don't try to talk any more."

"Tell me first what is the matter. Have I been out any? What have I said?" and he pressed both hands upon his head, as if to recall some vision.

"Never mind, now; it will tire you to talk. Nobody has seen you, or been here, except Dr. Wilbur and myself; so don't trouble yourself in the least."

"Then only you and the doctor heard anything I said? You are telling me truly?"

"Yes, truly, Uncle Jack. Will you go to sleep, now?"

"Tell me first what it is ails me."

"Dr. Wilbur calls it small-pox."

"I thought so; they had it on board the 'Sea-foam,' where I went when I was in Boston. The captain advised me not to stop there, but I wanted to see the old ship again. Does he think I shall get well? Tell the truth, child."

Jennie could not answer. She pressed his hand in silence, and turned away to hide her tears. A moment later Charles entered.

"How is it, doctor? Are you going to set me on my feet again? Jennie says I've been sick."

"I am doing all I can, captain. Your exposure the evening before I saw you has aggravated the disease. Is there any other physician you would like me to send for? Jennie wouldn't hear of calling in anybody else; but I've consulted several."

"And they — do they agree my case is hopeless?"

"Life and death are not in our hands, captain; only the Great Physician can aid you now. Can you go to him?"

"Jennie, bring the package from my desk; and the sealed envelope you will find in the little drawer on the left, give that to the doctor. 'Tis my will. I made it the day after I moved here from the house. And the package, seal it first, then leave me with the doctor. I must see him alone. You may come again in half an hour."

She went back at the time; but the eyes on which she gazed gave back no answering look of recognition. He was talking again, unconscious of all about him.

"Don't let him in here. Why should he ever find this place, and come here to torment me with the old memory; but he has not her face, only her voice; thank God for that. I'm glad school is done. I'm glad he's gone. But where. He may come again; he may recognize me. But I never wronged him, never! Mary! Mary! Was there ever constancy like hers? I wronged him most cruelly, but I didn't kill him; wronged his —— and you more than all, and all for that love I craved, and could not win. Don't thank me, Ben, for saving you; you wouldn't if you knew. 'Tis all over now. He won't come back. 'Tis so long — so long — But I didn't kill him! I wonder if Jennie suspects. I know he doesn't, but it worried her; it worried her

very life out, the fear lest he should. Jennie, did your mother ever tell you that — that —"

"You are dreaming, Uncle Jack. Wake up, and look at me. Don't you know me?"

He opened his eyes, and a faint smile spread over his countenance.

"You have been true to the very last. You haven't let anybody come near."

"No one, dear uncle!"

"And you have risked your own life to take care of me?"

"Who else should take care of you?"

"You may regret it by and by, when you know me for what I am. My life has been one long, deep draught from the very dregs of bitterness. You won't leave me now?"

"Never!"

"You wouldn't if you knew the worst of me? if you thought I had wronged you? if you knew I had embittered the lives of those most near to you? Say, would you care for me still?"

"Yes, always. I will be near you to the very last."

"If his creatures forgive, will not the Creator? Jennie, do you think He will forgive, who knows all things?"

"He has promised, 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' Only believe, Uncle Jack.

'All the fitness he requireth  
Is to feel your need of him.'"

"She told me so last night; your mother did. They came, both of them, and said he was fitting up a mansion for me. I wonder if 'tis ready. Kiss me, Jennie."

She pressed her lips to his for the first and last time. He would never receive caresses from her, even as a child.

An hour later Charlie found her there, kneeling by the bedside — found her alone with the dead.

They buried him next day — Charlie and Jennie the only two who followed him to his last resting-place.

Mrs. Brown had gone, at Jennie's suggestion, to her friends, taking the children with her; and Mr. Brown did not return till some days afterwards.

When the will was opened it was found that everything had been given to Dr. Wilbur, with the request that he would see to the improvement of the estate, and allow Mr. Brown to occupy it as formerly — his den to remain undisturbed, with everything in it, for

Jennie's use, — and concluded by asking him to give the whole to her in case she married, or if Ben Howard, who had been his mate on board the ship "Sea-foam," came back.

The other package, delivered into his hands for safe keeping, was to remain unopened till the same time.

Mr. Brown stormed and raved, but all to no purpose. The will was proved valid, and for anything the law could do, the property was Charlie's, and might be held by him and his heirs forever.

But law was not brother Charlie's gospel rule.

His first care was to have writings made, that in case he died, the whole would go where Captain Grey desired to have it.

And so nothing was left Mr. Brown to do, but swallow his wrath and bear his disappointment with the best grace he might.

## CHAPTER X.

"Unskilful he to fawn, or seek for power  
By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;  
Far other thoughts the good man learned to prize,  
More bent to raise the wretched than to rise!"

**M**ILLBROOK, though something of a manufacturing village, and well populated, considering its size, had but one church, except the old Quaker meeting-house, which graced its centre.

It had been under the pastoral care of one well worthy his profession, who had spent the best of his days laboring faithfully for the interests of his flock, looking after and caring for the temporal wants as well as the spiritual—one of those quiet, unpretending souls, whose lives breathe a continual sermon of that path whose ways are peace. He had settled there in the youthful vigor of manhood, and grown gray in his Master's service.

They were alone at the parsonage, he and his wife. The little buds, which, in early days, clustered about

the parent stem, were all transplanted, to bloom in the celestial gardens. Perhaps the lambs of his flock were the more loved by him; at least he lacked not the companionship of children. His study was the repository of every childish grief, and he, with a heart big enough to take in the whole world, found ample room for everything, whether of joy or sorrow, that centred in Millbrook.

No one thought of the place without associating him with it in some way. As soon think of Millbrook without its lake, which was the pride of every inhabitant, as with any other than dear old Pastor Fenn for its minister.

But after all these years, Squire Ring had come to dream otherwise; and what he dared to dream, his wife, Hannah, feared not to put in practice. His were mostly day-dreams, but it was only in the blackness of midnight the fruit of his scheming could be gathered.

Years before, he had plotted the great wrong of robbing Mary Lee of her home, denying, upon oath, the purchase of the cottage by Sailor Ben; and his wife, a second Jezebel, stood at his right hand through the whole transaction, to spur him on.

Joe told the truth, as far as he went, when he related to me, on the ice, some of their nefarious deeds, but, with the keen wit of a lawyer, managed to tell no more than half.

Of the deceit, and iniquity, and evil in the world, even in our little world, where brother Charlie guarded me so carefully, I had yet to learn.

Jennie, through the sacrifice of years, obtained a guitar; and it went, as thousands of things before it, to help make up the general assortment of stock in trade at the corner store. But it is doubtful whether old Josh Ring or his boys, with all their keen tact for trade, would have thought it necessary to remind Mr. Brown of the uselessness of it, and propose an exchange of wares, had not there been a presiding spirit, an evil genius, at his elbow. Only a jealousy cruel as the grave would have dreamed it; and Jennie's superior musical talent was the cynosure, in the eyes of her granddaughter, that suggested so cruel, so contemptible, a plan to Hannah Ring.

Not one of the whole family would have scrupled to deny that spirituous liquors were ever kept or sold on the premises; but whether they owned it or not, probably not one within a mile of there but had seen old

Tim Ryan, and a host of his kind, enter both house and store sober, and an hour after leave the place in a state of beastly intoxication. They were instant in season and out of season for everything that would add to their well-filled coffers, no matter who suffered by it, or how many were wronged.

Had Napoleon, with half his army, barricaded Uncle Jack's den when he lay helpless and unconscious in his last illness, Mrs. Ring would not have hesitated making an attack just to satisfy herself how matters stood; but she would have sooner put her hand in the fire than stepped upon the premises, knowing that in so doing she would expose herself to so fearful a disease as small-pox.

The storm was long in brewing, which was to spread itself over our sky, and leave us without a spiritual guide, or to the charge of another. It spread slowly, but surely; no one, perhaps, dreaming of the issue.

Deacon Lyman was the first, among those immediately interested in the welfare of the church, for whom this net was spread, and so guardedly, so warily, that the end was accomplished without arousing any suspicion in regard to their intentions.

This worthy personage, too susceptible to flattery,

and fully conscious of the dignity of his office, had only to be assured that due regard and deference to *his* opinion were wanting from both church and pastor, before he was content to sit idly by, and take no active part in either church or parish meetings.

So the number gradually lessened on one side, and they who plotted the trouble joined with the number to swell the voting list of the parish on the other.

Millbrook, with all her public places of amusement, had not, till this time, a billiard saloon in all her borders; and when first the sons of Squire Ring proposed this scheme to their father, and proceeded to carry it out, what wonder that Pastor Fenn, watching on the walls of Zion, all unconscious of the plotting of his enemies, should see this cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, rising to carry destruction and ruin in its train among the souls he labored for so zealously!

"Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men."

"Avoid it; pass not by it; turn from it, and pass away."

"As the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time."

With a heart alive to the danger that threatened, he pleaded long and earnestly for his Master, praying them to beware of the pitfalls and snares which are so alluring, but which take hold of the gates of death.

Then the storm burst!

It was no difficult task, for those who watched an opportunity like the present, to carry the day with an overwhelming majority, while half the number who should have stepped forward to the defence of their profession were lacking in courage, or grace, or both, to come out firmly on the Lord's side.

Pastor Fenn made no remonstrance, but quietly, meekly, as in God's sight, submitted to this ordination of Providence, and left this field of labor for another.

And so for nearly a year Millbrook was without a spiritual teacher, and her house of worship closed more than half the time.

The beginning of the second year brought a ray of light. Those who urged an exchange on the plea that Mr. Fenn was too far advanced in years to maintain the dignity of the pulpit, were gratified to see it filled by a young man, a nephew of his predecessor.

Perhaps he labored with greater zeal, knowing how

earnestly the old pastor's prayers ascended in his behalf; and the rapid increase in the number of his hearers, from Sabbath to Sabbath, was no little source of encouragement.

Did ever sin-sick soul pant for the water of life, whom Satan did not desire to have, that he might sift him as wheat? and so in this first moment of the Spirit's visitation came another still small voice, speaking like the piercings of a sword.

Millbrook Cemetery, in the rear of the church, was a general rendezvous for old and young during the hour of intermission. Probably more than half the matches in town had their origin there, as also half the quarrels.

In groups of twos and threes, the worshippers at the morning service disposed themselves for an hour's social gossip, or spiritual communion, as the case might be.

Jennie and I had strayed away one Sabbath noon, as usual, when Joe, just returned from college for a vacation, joined us. We were standing some distance from the main carriage-way, listening to his stories of college life, and repeating little incidents which had transpired in Millbrook during his absence, when we were joined by

another party, foremost among whom was Anna Ring, with her attendant satellite, Joe's sister Nancy.

"I've been prophesying," was the first remark of the former.

"Ah! indeed! Is Saul among the prophets?"

"I have prophesied a genuine New England revival, and foremost among the number, Fannie Wilbur; so you can have it all your own way whether or not I'm a false prophet! Young ministers, single ones especially, have a remarkable talent for sending home arrows of conviction to the hearts of their hearers. Look out, Fan, that your heart isn't pierced with an arrow from Cupid's quiver, if you expose it to his fire."

"What do you wish to insinuate?" queried Jennie, regarding Anna with a strange, sarcastic smile, that would have done credit to Mr. Kingsley.

"Nothing, nothing at all; I only made a plain statement of what I think will be proved *facts* in an incredibly short time. Here's Nancy; I was feeling seriously anxious about her, lest she might get carried into the whirlpool beyond all hope of rescue; but she seems outside the charmed circle at present."

"Tis hoped she won't slip her cable while anchored near so trustworthy a pilot," sneered Joe, whose for-



mer prejudices seemed not lessened by his year at college.

"I shall try to guide her safely past the maelstrom, and hope her brother may pass it in safety also. Of course it isn't to be expected that gentlemen will find the same attraction in this new comer. He should have brought a wife with him, and saved all this trouble!"

"All what trouble? You seem more deeply concerned than anybody else thus far!"

"Trouble of all these extra meetings — pastoral calls on Monday; anxious inquirers Tuesday; Bible class Wednesday; preparatory lecture Thursday, and so on the week through, with a Sabbath school double the usual number to look after Sunday noons. You'll see how they flock round him. Fan hasn't been absent from church or Sabbath school one single Sunday since this Jack without a Gill came here; and Jennie — well, it's the same story with the whole of 'em."

"Where should I pass my Sabbath but in God's house?" asked Jennie.

"O, nowhere else, of course."

"And what attraction brings Anna Ring? may I ask. I haven't missed seeing you here whenever I've been myself!"

"Why, the same that brings all the rest — to see and be seen of men. I make no pretensions to any more weighty reason."

"Truthful as ever," I retorted, turning to follow Jennie. "You who drove Pastor Fenn away, to make room for this young nephew of his, certainly should be first to hear and see him."

"What's that about driving Mr. Fenn away? If I understand aright, he left of his own free will." Mrs. Lyman, the deacon's wife, happened along in time to catch the last remark. "You don't call that being turned off, when he asked a dismissal?"

"I call it a downright shame, the whole transaction, from beginning to end," answered Joe. "If you want my opinion, I can give it in few words; not that I've anything against this one, or any other minister; but if I wanted to get rid of one, I would go and say so, and give my reasons, if I had any I wasn't ashamed of. This doing business underhand is too small for anybody, in the church or out of it."

"Wal, I can't help saying it was a great relief to me when he asked a dismissal. The church was getting in a state of lukewarmness, and needed a younger and smarter man to wake 'em up. Nothing but a divine

Providence could have interposed at the very season when it was most needed."

"Divine Providence!" repeated Joe. "If Providence contrived that plan, and couldn't find any better tools to work with —"

"Just the tools requisite. Couldn't find another so complete set for such a job the whole world over."

"Law sakes, Fannie, I didn't know you was so set about Mr. Fenn's staying here." Mrs. Lyman was too slow, mentally, to take any personal hints, and so most worthily kept her temper. "I thought all you young folks were for having a young man. Sally, she was dreadful fast for it; but I told her she no need to be looking ahead so far; ministers most always picked where the most learnin' was, and Sally's no hand for books. But, law sakes, nobody knows what may come of it yet."

"And nobody cares what comes of it. I'm very glad to have my eyes opened. What is it, Joe?"

"Last of all the devil came also," in an undertone; and looking around I met no other than old Hannah Ring.

## CHAPTER XI.

"So many feet that day by day  
Still wander from the fold astray."

IF Mrs. Ring was accidentally, or otherwise, a listener to what passed, she kept the knowledge to herself. Without taking up the thread just where Mrs. Lyman dropped it, she managed very soon to bring conversation to that point, taking care to coincide with every opinion Joe or I had previously expressed. She was apparently in the very best possible humor with herself and everybody else.

Joe, well versed in this order of things, replied as cautiously, while Jennie remained silent. Seemingly unconscious of the reticence of the one or the indifference of the other, she rattled on, directing most of her conversation to me, yet careful to say but little that would call for a reply where might be expected a difference of opinion.

The church, high school (a building for which was just completed), and new town-hall over it, all re-

ceived due attention; this latter bringing her indirectly to the point at which she aimed throughout the whole.

This building, erected at the expense of the town, occupied the corner directly opposite the store, and being completed somewhat earlier than was expected, a meeting was called by the town, who deemed it advisable for the chairman of the school committee to procure a teacher immediately, as a short term of ten weeks at that season would accommodate many who in the spring would be unable to attend.

Long before the hall was completed, arrangements were made for a series of assemblies, and a dancing-school was to begin forthwith.

Hannah Ring knew well my brother's opinion in regard to such gatherings, and so far as was possible — considering the end she had in view — coincided with him, arguing in favor of but little indulgence in such amusements; yet that little was extolled as the only criterion of enjoyment, and its loss as the crowning misery of a lifetime.

So, indorsing his sentiments, and sympathizing with me at the same time for the deprivation it insured, she wove her subtle web, and I, blind fool, listened.

Had she ventured an attack at any other point, her scheming would have been less successful. Charlie was my idol; and a word at the outset involving him or his opinion in any but the most favorable light would have loosened the scales at once.

With a feeling of inexpressible relief I heard the bell tolling for the afternoon service. Joe, who neither lost nor swallowed a single word she uttered, and doubtless thought the same true of me, amused himself by a repetition of it at every opportunity, imitating her gestures and voice in a way that would have amused me greatly had not other seed taken deep root, and rankled in my heart, to the exclusion of everything else.

Mechanically I entered the church, and took my usual seat; but of the service that followed I heard and knew nothing. If the things that perish not had before any place in my heart or interest there, they were as far from it now as the east from the west. I don't know that I had felt any unusual interest. I was only conscious of something wanting — a something that I could not define; and I resolutely steeled my heart against any impressions calculated to arouse my conscience in the least.

Anna Ring or the deacon's wife would have looked

in vain that afternoon to find in me anything but the most perfect indifference.

A meeting of some medical association with which Charlie was connected made it necessary for him to leave home early the next morning, and detained him in the city several days, during which time I had ample opportunity to mature all plans previously suggested.

A grand masquerade ball was already advertised to take place on the evening of the 15th of January, — my eighteenth birthday, — and I resolved to be there at whatever cost; not that I cared for the dancing, or anticipated any pleasure in so doing. Charlie would oppose, I well knew, and nearly every moment of his absence was spent in plotting how most successfully to meet his opposition.

I did not wonder at the surprised, pained look with which he met me in the dining-room, after looking for me in the office, where I seldom failed to be first to greet him after any absence, however short. The meal was an unusually silent one, and it was no small relief to me when he rose from the table, and went out to the stable. Just a moment his hand rested on my head when he passed me. I could not look at him. One glance in the face so dear above all others would

have brought me back in an instant. A few moments later he drove out of the yard; and knowing that his professional duties would detain him till a late hour, I went to the office to spend the evening alone, and further fortify myself for the siege which I knew would follow.

I must have fallen asleep; for he came in without arousing me, and a deep-drawn sigh was the first intimation I had of his presence. He sat there in his chair, just as he did almost three years before, and I, with a burden heavier than the previous one, occupied, as then, a corner of the sofa.

"Well, sis, what is it?"

"Nothing particular; only thinking."

"Thoughts your brother may not share? Come, I've waited long enough;" and a hand was extended towards me.

"Do you know I'm almost eighteen?" I did not rise to greet him, or dare meet his look when he replied, —

"Eighteen! and too large to sit in my lap any longer? Well, well; I suppose I can learn, but I shall miss my baby sadly."

I felt myself growing weaker every moment, and so resolved to come direct to the point.

"No larger; but old enough to know what I like, and have some choice in the manner of spending my time."

As no reply was forthcoming, I ventured a little farther, and alluding to the ball in as indifferent a manner as I could assume, expressed my intention of going.

For a little while after this announcement no word was spoken by either. All was still, so still, I began to think I must be alone, and at last ventured to turn my head, and open my eyes, to see if Charlie had left the room.

He had risen from his chair, and was standing directly opposite me. Can I ever forget that look? Our eyes met; and stepping across the room, he knelt at my side.

I well knew how earnest was the petition offered there in my behalf, though no audible sound escaped his lips.

Rising at last, he stooped to kiss the lips that had wounded him so cruelly, and then went back to his chair.

Was it the prayer or the kiss that conquered?

In the dear old place I told him all — all my temp-

tation, and all my misery, since the Sabbath noon before, beginning with the first insinuation of Anna Ring, and withholding not a word her grandmother said.

"And so she could not spare my one ewe lamb. By and by you will learn that 'tis safer to trust your brother than these summer friends."

## CHAPTER XII.

"Is this thine?  
Is there a duplicate of mine?"

CHARLIE came in to breakfast next morning with a very knowing look.

"What is it?" I asked. "Tell me, please."

"Tell you what?"

"Murder will out. You've got some plan in your head, I know. Don't be selfish, and keep the whole!"

"How much will satisfy?"

"Nothing less than half—for my own to keep; and let me see the other half, so I shall know whether you've cheated. Come, are you going to tell me or not?" after waiting some time for a reply.

"Certainly; all there is you shall have. But don't be in such haste. It won't spoil with keeping. Wait till evening; and if I think of anything worth telling, you shall hear it."

Charlie did not have to seek me that night! Long

before the hour for his return, I was established in his chair, to await his arrival.

"There, now," I began, as soon as I had exchanged my place for a seat in his lap, "begin at the very first, and don't leave out a single bit. The story must have grown a lot, for it has been the very longest day I ever knew."

"The very longest?"

"Yes; unless I except some of those days when you were absent," was the hesitating reply.

"Did you miss me so much, then?"

"Don't, Charlie—please don't. I can't bear it. You are a thousand times dearer than anything this world contains, whether you believe me or not. And I—I am your greatest trouble and anxiety!"

"You wrong us both, my child! You are the one bright star of my life, if you do turn a dark side to me now and then. Could I see my sister walking in the light of the 'Sun of Righteousness,' I would ask nothing more."

For reply, I drew his face nearer mine, and covered it with kisses.

"And I did disappoint you very much?" he asked, returning my mute caress; "and to atone in some measure, how would a birthday party of your own

answer? And as Jennie's is the same date, I would suggest that you two form a copartnership, and celebrate together."

"What a grand old fellow for plans and surprises! That's just the very best idea that ever originated in your head. How will you manage it all?"

"I shall leave the management with you. You must do the planning, — you and Jennie, — and I will execute orders. You can, if you wish, make an antiquarian party of it, and write your invitations accordingly. That will be a nearer approach to the original intention."

"Capital! Splendid! But I haven't a thing to wear that would look ancient, and not much time to make anything. If I had all the stitches I put in and ripped out, trying to get ready for that ball, I should be fully armed and equipped."

"Never mind. I will provide whatever you need in that line. What next?"

"Jennie, of course. I can't do anything without her help. We must have her here immediately. Can't you run over and get her, or let me go?"

"That's one item already attended to. I saw her before I came in, and told her you would have some

business to transact this evening which would require her presence; and she promised to come."

Never was a longer programme made out in so short a time as on that evening, the invitations all being written, and on the way, before eight o'clock, — the hired man volunteering to act as circulating agent.

The most perplexing subject was our dress. Everything was proposed that ingenuity could contrive, and still we came no nearer any definite arrangement. At last, after a great deal of coaxing, Charlie was persuaded to personate the part of grandfather, and as his granddaughters, our plans were completed.

His business at the meeting of the 'Medical Association' requiring nearly all his time, he had only found opportunity while absent to advertise for a teacher for the Millbrook High School, and appoint a time and place in the city where he would meet candidates for the situation. The day appointed was the 14th of January; and so it was decided for us to accompany him to Boston and make our own selection of dresses, which were to be hired for the occasion. The remainder of the day we were to spend as we chose, while Charlie attended to the business that called him there.

The evening of the 15th of January proved most favorable, and at an early hour Jennie and I, attired

in a garb of 'ye olden time,' descended the stairs, and went in pursuit of brother Charlie.

"He will be late; I know he will; and it will spoil half our fun if he is not dressed and in readiness to welcome our guests," said I, after we had searched for him in vain at the stable and in the parlor.

"He may be in his room," suggested Jennie.

"No; I called at his door, and to satisfy myself, after receiving no answer, went in. His horse is away too. I do hope nobody will detain him; it will be too bad. It is just the time for Aunt Martha Benson to have one of her sudden attacks, and think she is going to die. I should expect to live forever, if I had been cheated half as many times. It's past seven o'clock already. Let's go look on the office slate, and see what orders have been left to-day; that will help put us on the right track;" and crossing the hall, I opened the door.

In his chair before the open grate sat Charlie, dressed in a suit of black velvet, made in the style of half a century back, with silk stockings, and shining knee-buckles; a powdered wig, the curling locks of which reached his shoulder; and a golden-headed cane, on the top of which one hand rested, while in the other he held the evening paper, which he was reading by the aid

of a pair of spectacles, the eyes of which might have been mistaken for small-sized panes of glass.

Upon our entrance the paper was thrown aside, and a hand extended. It was the old motion, — that peculiar welcome he always gave me, — though the voice could hardly be recognized.

"Good evening, dears. Come sit right here in grandpa's lap; he hasn't seen his pets to-day;" and two eyes, brimming over with fun, peered over the tops of the great glasses for a moment.

With a shout that echoed over the whole house I responded to the invitation; and Jennie, taking a seat upon the arm of his chair, playfully took away his cane, and begged him to tell us a story of when he was a boy!

We had not a long time in which to listen to a rehearsal of grandpa's boyhood, for a ring at the door-bell announced an arrival; and leading us, one by each hand, while we bashfully hung back, our aged grandsire hastened, as fast as his feeble steps would allow, to obey the summons.

Some half-dozen couples were gathered on the piazza, and the sound of voices and suppressed laughter which reached us while passing through the hall was instantly hushed when the door opened.

With jokes, and jest, and merry outbreak at every



new recognition, the party were finally disposed of in the sitting-room, only one among the whole number being able to effect an entrance and gain his seat unrecognized; and he, poor fellow, seemed at a loss what to do next, and how best to dispose of his hands and feet, the former of which he continually changed from one pocket to the other, while he answered nearly every question put to him by an awkward shake of the head.

Through the early part of the evening he obstinately refused to join in any game, but at last, seeming to gain confidence, took part with the others, his awkward, uncertain movements adding greatly to the mirth of the occasion.

When supper was announced, he offered an arm each to Jennie and me; and with our gallant escort between us, who seemed to be studying in vain how to avoid stepping on our feet, we followed the others to the dining-room.

"Joe ought to be one of this party," whispered Jennie, when we paused at the door of the parlor, after leaving the dining-room, an hour later.

"Yes; Joe would pronounce this jolly — nificent. Too bad for him to be shut up inside college walls. I wish his vacation could have continued longer. Wonder if he remembers the skating-party three years ago?

If we hadn't been guilty of so many quarrels since, he would probably remember the row we had, if nothing more."

"You are most too bad, Fan. I believe you are the first transgressor more than half the time. Own up, now; don't you enjoy a quarrel with him occasionally?"

"Don't think I ever denied it! Look here, bub," turning to our knight-errant, who remained near, swallowing every word. "Some one is at the door, and Charlie — the 'old man' has gone to the stable. Do you think you can pilot in this new arrival without endangering life or limb?"

"You bet!" he replied, moving reluctantly away; but before he could reach the door, it was thrown open, and a green-robed troubadour entered.

Throwing a hasty glance across the room, without a moment's hesitation he advanced to the spot where Jennie stood leaning upon my arm, and bowing low, as if in recognition of old friends, dropped on one knee before us; then, sweeping his fingers across the strings of his guitar, he sang, without further prelude, a simple German song, —

"O, welcome me back —"

The whole party closed about the singer instantly,

unable to withhold their applause till the conclusion of the song, and encored again and again, in the vain attempt to recognize the musician. It was given up after a while, by the proposal of some new games, which were played, with infinite satisfaction to all, till a late hour, when the motion was made to separate.

"Not yet — not yet! 'Forfeits' first; we haven't played that all the evening."

"Yes, forfeits! forfeits!" was echoed on all sides of the room; and Charlie rose from his seat beside the new comer, and began the game at once, answering nearly all the questions put to him in so satisfactory a manner, that he succeeded in making the entire circuit of the room, gaining his seat with only the loss of his spectacles and cane.

"You will come back bankrupt!" remarked Jennie, when our unknown gallant to the dining-room started in his turn to make the same tour. "You've got at least thirty questions to answer, and I hope every one will bear on the same point. Wish it was lawful to ask the same one twice; we would soon find you out."

Our verdant youth was not to be daunted; he appeared to be amply provided with fees, and paid his forfeits whenever occasion required, his stock seeming to increase at every forfeiture, like the widow's cruise,

till, the last question being satisfactorily disposed of, he resigned his former seat, and took another beside Jennie and me.

So, one after another, each made the same circuit, till only the musician remained, his turn coming last in order.

Though answering many questions put to him so as to evade recognition, he had not succeeded in gaining the opposite side of the room from which he started before nearly everything which he could make available was sacrificed.

No one, after the first, had asked his name, and his guitar had compensated for the withholding of that.

"You must have two names, at least," said Jennie, when he paused before her. "Your surname, please."

Watch, chain, keys, handkerchief, and some half dozen other trinkets, marked his course already; and he stood undecided for a moment; then, as if an after-thought had suggested something before unremembered, he drew a ribbon from the pocket of his vest, and removing something attached to it, placed it in Jennie's hand, closing her fingers over it, with the remark, —

"I must trust to your honor not to look at it; since in so doing you would gain a double portion, my name,

a part of it, being engraved thereon. The ribbon I will keep for future use;" and passed to the next.

"Your middle name, if you have one. What is it?"

It was the very question I was waiting impatiently to ask myself, since the remark of Jennie had suggested the possibility of there being one; but I was superseded.

"My middle name?" and he looked at the ribbon, and then at the questioner. "If I may credit your word some three years ago, my middle name is 'Torment.'"

"Mr. Kingsley!"

"Joe!"

The words came simultaneously from both, and at the same instant Charlie sprang from his seat towards Jennie. She had fainted away senseless.

But wherefore. No one knew; perhaps none cared to know. Nothing was asked, and no curiosity seemed awakened.

Mr. Kingsley threw off the mask of gauze from his face, and bending over the outstretched form which Charlie had placed upon the sofa, unclasped the fingers which still grasped tightly the forfeit that paid his indebtedness a moment before, and turned to Charlie.

"Is there anything, doctor, I can do? Is she subject to such sudden attacks?"

"Not that I am aware of. If you will open the window and doors near, I think she will soon recover."

"Why don't you do something for her, Charlie?" and I sprang to her side. "Jennie, Jennie! speak to me. What is the matter with her? She never fainted before in her life."

"Be quiet, sis! There is no cause for alarm. She will be better in a few minutes. It is very warm here; perhaps the heat overcame her. You may bring a glass of water."

I hastened to get it. Mr. Kingsley followed me to the dining-room.

"Let me carry it for you, Miss Fannie. Your friend's illness has so frightened you, that your suffering exceeds her own. Sit there a moment till I return;" and he led me to a chair. Then taking another glass, — for I had let the first fall from my trembling fingers, — he hurried to the parlor.

"You are a very Damon and Pythias — you two," was his first remark, after he came back. "I used often to admire the unselfish regard which you seemed always to manifest for each other, and wondered if it would continue. It seems unchanged as yet. Do

you always agree on every point, or do you agree to disagree?"

"We love each other as sisters."

"And sisters are sometimes enemies, you know."

"We *trust* each other entirely. But tell me, when did you come to Millbrook, and how?"

"Your brother's horse arrived at the same time with myself. What do you make of that fact?"

"Not much of anything. Did Charlie expect you?"

"I saw him yesterday in the city, and you too. Had he not told me of the party, and invited me to be present, I should have made myself known there and then: as it was, I wished to surprise you. Do you see now, or must I interpret still further? Fannie, tell me truly, do you welcome your old teacher back to Millbrook?"

"O, I understand it all now! Yes, welcome back again! Charlie says I'm to go to school till I'm thirty, to keep me out of mischief. I only wish Jennie could go too; but she proposes to teach herself, if she can obtain a situation."

"The school will be so large I shall require assistance, and the committee left it with me to make my own selection. Your friend would have ample time to attend to her own studies, and render me all the assist-

ance necessary. Tell her, by and by, that such is my choice, and see if she regards the proposal favorably."

"Thank you. It will suit her better than anything else if she can teach and study at the same time."

"That is what I propose doing myself, and have engaged my teacher already."

"*You* study, Mr. Kingsley? Engaged a teacher for what?"

"Your brother is to be my teacher. I shall begin immediately the study of medicine under his tuition. My home is here for the present. You welcomed me as your teacher; can you welcome me as a brother also?"

I gave him my hand.

"Do you remember of what this day is the anniversary?"

"Why — yes — it is my eighteenth birthday!"

"What else? You haven't forgotten our mutual pledge at the Cedars, the night of the skating-party, three years ago? I have looked forward to the expiration of the ten years, many times, myself, and wondered if you, too, remembered it!"

"Yes, I recollect perfectly well; not only that, but another little episode which transpired the same day. Is your memory as correct?" and I held up a hand,

and pointed to a little scar just visible. I did not add that I had spent hours pricking the skin to keep it so. "Aren't you sorry? Do you promise not to do so again?"

"Not a-bit sorry; and you mustn't ask me to make any rash promises. I might be tempted to break them, you know."

I could not help smiling to see he still retained the habit of twirling his mustache on certain occasions.

"No, I won't make any promises;" and going to the table, he poured some water and brought me.

"Now, if you feel better, we will join the others, and see if Jennie has recovered. I really feared you would faint yourself when you came here. I shall set this down as the first case which came to my practice, and flatter myself it has been treated skilfully."

"Do you feel well as ever now, Jennie?"

I put the question an hour later, after we had retired to my room, and the company had gone, all but Mr. Kingsley, whom we left in the office with brother Charlie.

"Yes, quite well, thank you. I frightened you badly—did I not, darling?" throwing both arms about my neck.

"Did you recognize Mr. Kingsley, or Joe, before you fainted?"

"No, I hadn't once thought of either being present, the entire evening."

"What did he give you to pay the forfeit for the question you proposed? Did you look at it?"

She answered by a negative shake of the head; then drawing forth the "seal," which she always carried with her, she held it in the light, and whispered *a single word!*

## CHAPTER XIII.

"Poor wayward soul, I know that thou art seeking  
Some *other* way, as all have sought before,  
To silence the reproachful, inward speaking —  
A *landward* path unto an *island shore*!"

"Why wilt thou turn away?  
I fain would lead thee to the living streams,  
And point thee there — where shines eternal day!"

THE evil influences brought to bear against everything in Millbrook of a moral or religious nature were not without weight; but notwithstanding every effort to the contrary, the good work begun steadily progressed. God's Spirit was striving in the hearts of not a few, and the seed sown in the years gone by, though long buried and forgotten, now sprang up, giving promise of a bountiful harvest. In the prayer-meeting, in the workshop, at home, and at school, these messages of grace were whispered, and arrows of conviction found their way to hearts hardened in iniquity.

With a zeal that knew no cessation, the young min-

ister labored for the interests of the church, aided and encouraged by the prayers of his uncle, dear old Pastor Fenn, who rejoiced no less in this good work because Providence had removed him too far away to witness personally this ingathering into the kingdom.

What matter that another "bound the sheaves," so that God was glorified?

Joe's leaving for college the day before the party was all a farce to deceive us and prevent recognition, the extent of his travels that day being no greater distance than to Cedarville, where he stopped with his friend and college chum, Ned Brier, till the following evening, and came back in time to fall in with the group who gathered at the bridge and came in company.

Learning that Mr. Kingsley was to remain in Millbrook as teacher of the High School, he decided to remain at home until spring, and attend school there, where he could keep up with his classes, and at the same time greatly lessen his expenses. His friend Ned was persuaded to remain also.

So quietly that for a long time its presence was scarcely perceptible came the holy influence into our school — a tiny pebble in the stream, whose circles

ceased not to spread and widen till they reached its farthest shores.

We were leaving the yard one Wednesday evening, Charlie and I, as was our usual custom, to attend the prayer-meeting, when he was called away suddenly to a distant part of the town. For a moment I stood at the gate, undecided whether to proceed alone or turn back.

Mr. Kingsley was in the office, engaged with some medical works; but seeing how matters stood, he laid them aside, and came out to join me.

"He that putteth his hand to the plough and looketh back is not fit for the kingdom;" and drawing my arm through his, we walked down the street. I looked to see the sarcastic smile, but I looked in vain.

He was not a professor of religion, and it seemed — I hardly knew why — as if anything tending to that point must meet with opposition from him. Yet he seemed no opposer. As the interest in school daily increased, lessening in a corresponding degree the interest in school and school duties, he very quietly laid aside, for the time, the lessons that required most attention, and, unlike himself, left matters to arrange themselves.

Was he, too, striving against the Spirit?

We walked the whole distance in silence. A crowd

was gathered about the door of the church when we reached it, and the entry nearly filled with those who came and waited outside to gratify an idle curiosity. They fell back to make room for us to pass, and low jests and whispered criticisms, which reached our ears, fell not unheeded by me, while we waited for the singing to cease.

"O, turn ye, O, turn ye, for why will ye die,  
Since God in great mercy is coming so nigh?  
The Saviour invites you, the Spirit says, Come,  
And angels are waiting to welcome you home."

"The doctor's baby will be snared this time. Never any lack for game when a young minister fixes the noose."

I recognized the speaker, Bill Ring, at once. Not one of the whole family but had the same peculiarity of voice, which a comparative stranger would notice.

Mr. Kingsley turned, and cast upon him a look which, it seemed, might annihilate one of smaller dimensions; as it was, he drew back behind the crowd, and remained out of sight till we entered the church.

But it served to awaken a new train of thought, far different from that which previously engrossed my attention. For a week and more I had felt as one walled in on every side, without hope of escape; and

the more I struggled against it, the heavier became the burden, and blacker and deeper looked my sin. In my misery, I had forgotten, in a measure, the words spoken that Sabbath noon in the cemetery; but this repetition of the same sentiment turned the scale at once, and brought it all most vividly to my mind. How would they mistake my motive, if I dared make known the one desire which haunted me day and night!

Even the deacon's wife had insinuated the same in the most public manner.

O, Mrs. Lyman, was it in the spirit of your Master that you went about your Master's work?

"Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

"Come, now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool;" and a hundred voices caught up the refrain, —

"And now he is waiting your soul to receive:  
O, why will you linger? If you will believe,  
If sin is your burden, why will you not come?  
'Tis you he bids welcome; he bids you come home."

And all the while they sang, eager souls responded

to the invitation, and pressing forward up the broad aisles, took their places in the already well-filled seats that occupied the space before the pastor's desk.

A veiled figure arose in their midst, clothed in the dark habiliments which tell the tale of bereavement. That same afternoon she had followed to the grave an only and idolized child; the one precious bud, on which centred her fondest hopes, stricken down in a moment by the fell destroyer. And yet her countenance betrayed no hopeless sorrow, for she mourned not as those without hope. Kneeling by the empty cradle, from which her treasure had been taken, she drank from the fountain of living waters, and rose to a new life and a new joy.

And so she stood among that multitude, and testified to the fulness of that love which drew her nearer the Golden Gate, through which her flower had gone to be transplanted in the Celestial Gardens.

"A shepherd was gathering his sheep into the fold. Night was coming on, dark and dreary, and they had wandered away up the mountain side, and he hasted to bring them to a place of safety.

"At last they were all gathered in the place his watchful care had provided, — all but one, — which, with its lamb, still wandered farther and farther away,



heeding not the tender voice calling in vain for its return.

"Back and forth, through thicket and bramble, and dark, lonely gorges, where were a thousand dangers, the shepherd followed this wanderer, till, weary with the effort, he took the lamb in his arms, and gathering it in his bosom, turned back to retrace his steps; and, lo! close at his feet, behind him, with her eye upon her lamb, the mother followed her treasure to a place of safety."

A holy awe seemed to settle upon the whole congregation while the pastor was speaking. He continued, —

"We are all wanderers up the mountain-side, and our Shepherd waits with outstretched arms to receive us. Can we, dare we, refuse the invitation, and turn a deaf ear to the voice that entreats us to come back, and flee the dangers that await us? O, neglect not his offers of mercy. Withhold not the heart, bought with his precious blood, lest *he take your idol from you*; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

But there was one among the number whom I little expected to see there. Joe's friend, Ned, was rejoicing in hope — a hope which came to him in that very

hour; and rising, he told of the peace which he had found, and begged his friends to come with him. Instantly Joe rose to his feet, and started forward; then pausing suddenly, he looked back, and *our eyes met!* "Almost persuaded!" What was the little weight that turned the scale, where so much hung in the balance?

Instinctively I raised my eyes to Mr. Kingsley. For the first time I saw his eyes filled with tears. How many times I had heard him say there was nothing on earth worth a tear! It must have been a powerful agency to affect him thus.

He grasped my hand as if he would save me from an impending danger, and took a step forward, his every look and gesture an urgent entreaty that I would fly with him to a place of safety; but I changed not one hair's breadth from my position.

"Not for an interest in heaven!"

It seemed to me that I shrieked the words aloud; but it was only a whisper in which they were uttered. It was all over in a moment, and he was in his seat beside me, his face wearing its natural look.

I did not know through what tribulation I was yet to follow my idol back to the kingdom; did not know the agony, the remorse in store because a soul dearer

than life itself should linger outside, where I had thrust it.

There seemed a stifled, moaning sound in the air above and about me. Was it the sighing of angels?

"Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

So I put far from me the salvation offered, and the grieved Spirit took its flight.

## CHAPTER XIV.

"When a woman says she will, she will —  
You may depend on't;  
And when she says she won't, she won't —  
And that's the end on't."

THE music lessons, so abruptly concluded when Mr. Kingsley left Millbrook, at the close of his first term of school, were resumed as soon as practicable after his return.

In three years that intervened, Jennie had made rapid progress, though with little assistance. For myself, I had advanced but slowly, the little attention given to the subject being hardly sufficient to enable me to retain what I previously learned.

It made my task no easier that I was obliged to plod on alone in the first rudiments which her skilful fingers had already mastered, and perhaps it tended not to increase Mr. Kingsley's small stock of patience. I would have given up, willingly, gladly, but for brother Charlie. He was a passionate lover of music, and would be deeply disappointed if I discontinued al-

together; and Mr. Kingsley, whenever I broached the subject, would add his entreaties, coaxing, scolding, and threatening alternately, as the case might be; encouraging my most feeble efforts on one day, and including every measure I played with a severe reprimand the next.

They fell with very little weight. His bitterest reproofs but served to rouse my anger. They neither mortified nor wounded. There were times when I rather enjoyed it, for it gave me opportunity for venting my temper, which I was not slow in doing.

I was sitting at the piano, one Saturday morning, with a little Swiss melody before me. It was the lesson given the week before. At its conclusion Mr. Kingsley had made a proposition to us — Jennie being present at the time — to go on the lake for lilies the next Saturday. I drummed away for an hour without regard to time or accent, caring only to see the end of my two hours' practice; for that had been a clause added to the first proposal of the excursion, with the playful assurance that I was to forfeit the anticipated pleasure, if I failed to fulfil that part of the contract.

The clock struck a second time, and I rose from my seat, with a sense of relief, to leave the room; but the door was barricaded!

Mr. Kingsley closed the book of surgery in his hand.

"Another hour wholly devoted to the lesson would be no more than sufficient to balance your *two hours'* practice," he said, with a sneer.

"I came here at precisely eight o'clock, sir; and if you will take the trouble to look at your watch, you will find it past ten now, if your time is right."

"If it is correct as the time in which you played your lesson, I might expect to see the sun set at noon!"

He returned my music to the place from which it had fallen, and motioned me to a seat at the instrument; then placing a chair by the music stool, he sat down by my side and resumed his book.

At eleven my fingers had not touched the keys, but I remained quietly seated there, and he as quietly continued his own studies. But it soon became evident that he had no idea of losing his anticipated pleasure on the lake. The time was set at an early hour in the afternoon, and now there remained but little more than time for the accomplishment of my hour's practice and dinner before Jennie might be expected.

He returned his book to its place in the library, and coming back to his seat, said, —

"We've had enough of this, Fannie. Count aloud

now, and see if you can make some improvement in your time."

I began to play, but obstinately remained silent.

"It's no use; you've lost a whole measure at least. Count aloud with me;" and he began that monotonous "one, two, three, four," which is the plague and vexation of every beginner in music.

"I don't like to play. I don't want to learn. I never wish to hear another note as long as I live;" and I attempted to rise from my seat.

"Where are you going?"

"To find my brother, and ask him if I may leave it off."

"You will have to go out of town to see him before evening," was the reply. "You know his wish in this matter already. If you were a little less childish sometimes, it would add somewhat to your graces! Will you count with me, or do you prefer to count alone?"

"I don't prefer to count at all!" and I began the lesson in silence as before.

"You are wasting every moment you spend thus. Do you know it is nearly noon?"

"I don't know or care anything about it. All I know is, that I don't take any interest in music, and don't want to have anything more to do with it. And

now, if you will allow me to pass, or leave me alone —"

"I shall do neither," he interrupted. "You are here to learn your lesson, and I am here to assist you."

"When I want any of your assistance I will let you know; till that time you had better resume your own studies."

"Thank you! I would really like to ask when you think they would be completed, if I followed the example before me. Medical science would be lost to the world, if it waited for an 'M. D.' to be affixed to my name."

"You might put one there now."

"And what would it signify?"

"Mule Driver!"

"I think it would be very applicable in the present instance. Allow me to magnify the office by telling you once more to play the lesson, and count it."

I began at the place designated.

"Why do you not count?"

"I am counting."

"I don't hear you. Count aloud with me — one, two, three, four."

"I can't, Mr. Kingsley; you know I can't."

"Ah! Mr. so soon? I thought we put that aside last evening."

"I don't care if we did. I shall never call you any thing else when you tease me in this way. I wouldn't call you brother to save your life, when you are so different from Charlie! You are not to be thought of the same day with him. I wish I knew your middle name. I hope it's perfectly horrible. If ever I find it out, I'll call you by it the whole time, you ugly, hateful old torment!"

I felt perfectly safe in saying it, or anything else I chose, knowing he would never repeat a word to my brother. Had I dared a tenth part any other day, when under his tuition, I wouldn't have answered for the consequences. I could see well how much it aggravated him, that his authority extended no further. We were well used to skirmishes of this sort, but it was seldom they were carried so far.

At this moment dinner was announced, and he arose from his seat.

"Come, Fannie, we shall keep Mrs. Hall waiting."

"I don't want any dinner. I shall wait and eat with brother Charlie!"

"I think he will find a very agreeable companion. I can assure you, if he were here, you would return to the piano in a very different frame from the present."

"Yes, sir! If Charlie asked me to play the lesson, I should do it."

"And count, too, I presume."

"Yes, if he wanted me to!"

"And why not now, since you know it is his wish?"

"Charlie would ask it, and I would do it — anything in the world to please him, because I love him; but you — you *command* me, and I *can't*, and I *won't*; for I *hate* you, and I won't be commanded by anybody."

He would have put his hand over my lips before I finished the sentence; but I anticipated his movement, and raising my own, struck it away with all the force I could command. He turned and walked across the room.

The outer door opened and closed.

"Just in time — am I not? and dinner is waiting, not for me, surely, for I didn't expect to return before night. Where are they — Mr. Kingsley and my sister. Have you called them?" It was my brother's voice.

That kindly, cheery voice — it brought me back at once. How would it wound him to meet me thus! Quick as thought I crossed the room to Mr. Kingsley's side, and seized his hand, the one I had wilfully struck a moment before.

"Forgive me," I whispered. "I didn't mean to hurt you. I didn't mean to get so angry. Please leave me while you eat dinner with the others, and let me learn the music."

He looked down into my face. His own was livid with emotion, but not with anger.

"And tell Charlie to excuse me from the dining-room to-day. He will, if you ask it; and please don't let him come here — not yet!"

He took my face in both his hands, and sealed his forgiveness with a kiss, the first he ever gave me.

"By and by, when I am more worthy, you will take back a part of what you said."

I had forgotten it so soon, and knew not to what he referred.

A step was heard in the hall, and I could not ask him.

"Please leave me now, brother Will; Charlie is coming for us;" and Mr. Kingsley went to the dining-room, and I returned again to the piano.

## CHAPTER XV.

"Back, then, complainer! loathe thy life no more,  
Nor deem thyself upon a desert shore,  
Because the rocks the nearer prospect close!"

"Would she have walked more nobly, think,  
With a man beside her to lead the way,  
Hand joining hand in the marriage link?  
Possibly, yes! but likelier, nay!"

IT was late in the afternoon when I met him again. The whole lesson was learned perfectly long before that hour; but nothing had I seen of Jennie during the time, though expecting her every moment. Could it be they had been on the lake without me? The thought brought a keen pang. I had no reason to think otherwise, so far as it concerned Mr. Kingsley; but I could think of no argument which seemed in itself sufficient to induce Jennie to go without my knowledge.

We were leaving the tea table when she came in.

"That was a very fine idea," she said, coming around

to my side. "I was glad to have our excursion deferred till a later hour than was at first proposed, 'tis so much pleasanter on the water at twilight. Who suggested the change?"

I went for my hat, leaving Mr. Kingsley to answer the question as he chose.

"We'll bring you some lilies, Aunt Mary," shouted Jennie, as our boat passed her home, opposite the group of cedars. She was sitting in the doorway, not a stone's throw from the water's edge, with an open box in her lap, tenderly regarding its contents.

"Thank you, dear," was the kindly answer. "Aunt Martha was wishing for some to-day, but I knew of no way to get them."

"Will you go with us? We shall soon return;" and Mr. Kingsley turned the boat towards the shore.

"Not this time. Mrs. Benson is not as well as usual this afternoon, and I couldn't think of leaving her alone, though I thank you just the same."

"Her first thought is always for that fussy old woman. I wonder how she can endure her presence," I said. "That was a water-lily she had in her hand when we first saw her; but 'twas withered and dry."

Yes, it was withered! Twenty-three years it had lain in the box with the other hoarded treasures that

kept Sailor Ben in remembrance — the very lily he plucked and offered for her thoughts, that last evening they spent together!

We found her in the same place on our return, two hours later, and stopped to give her the flowers, selecting for her the choicest we could find.

"We must stop at the Cedars just for a moment," said Mr. Kingsley. "I've never been there except in winter." We both expressed our willingness.

"Come, Aunt Mary; you can leave just for that little voyage;" and Jennie moved nearer me, to make room for her. "It's perfectly beautiful on the water this evening, and you can return any moment you wish."

"If it will not trouble you too much. I've been looking at those trees ever since you went away, and wishing in some way to get there."

Mr. Kingsley helped her to a seat, and took up the oars. In five minutes she knelt upon the little island, under the very branches where, twenty-three years before, she stood with Sailor Ben! We passed around to the other side, for we felt that her grief was sacred.

"Where have you been to, Mary? Seems to me you're off somewhere's eena most all the time."

"Not very far. I did not think you would wake so

soon, else I wouldn't have left at all. You seemed to be sleeping so nicely when I went out!"

"Asleep! Seems to me you think I sleep all the time. I haven't been asleep. What time is it?"

"A little past eight. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No; nothing you can do, or anybody else. My troubles are beyond your reach."

"Perhaps I can find something. Do you feel worse?"

"Massy sake, I'm alwers wuss! There ain't a well streak about me. I wonder how folks can talk after sich a fashion! But 'tis alwers so. Them that's well and hearty don't know nothin' about the ailin' and aches o' them that's sick; and them that's sick themselves don't have no chance to think o' other folks that's wuss."

"Shall I get you some tea?"

"What good do you think tea would do?"

"Something else, then?"

"I don't want nothin' in the world. It's no kind o' use. I alwers did hate to be a messin'. Some folks want to be swillin' down somethin' all the time. For my part I ain't no hand to be a dosin'. 'Tain't many folks lived to be nigh on to eighty that's got along with so little doctor's stuff as I have; and they're pretty

scarce as have had so many aches and pains as I've undergone. Now ye ain't a going to work on them shoes agin to-night— are ye?"

"Only a little while, so I can finish them Monday, after washing."

"What is the use? There's time enough. There ain't no washing to amount to anything; only what little you have. For my part, I don't go nowhere, and so don't have no clothes to take care on. How much money have you got?"

"A little over three dollars; and the rent is paid to September; and we've wood enough to last till after Christmas! I feel quite rich!"

"Three dollars won't go very far; and there's no tellin' where the next will come from, they pay so little for work. Squire Josh! — 'tain't much he thinks of the misery that's undergone, while he's rakin' and scrapin,' and grindin' the face o' the poor. I hain't much faith in sich sort o' folks!"

"Here are some lilies. You were wishing for some this morning."

"Lilies! Where'd they come from?"

"Jennie gave them to me for you. She and Fannie went a sail down the lake, and gathered them. See how nice and fresh they are."



"Yes, I s'pose they are all well enough; but they are drefful sickish things; so kind o' flat. I don't think much of 'em. The doctor wasn't along? I did hope he'd run in once more."

"No; Mr. Kingsley went with them."

"Who?"

"Mr. Kingsley, the High School teacher."

"O, wal, I suppose it's all right enough, if the doctor's satisfied to have her a kitin' round with sich onsartin critters! Alwers seemed kinder strange about him. Nobody knows who he is, or where he come from, as I've hearn tell. I hope he's all right; but I ain't much faith in sich folks."

"Dr. Wilbur regards him favorably. He spends all his time out of school studying medicine."

"What does he know about sickness? I'm sure I don't want none o' his bread pills!"

"He is studying under a very skilful physician, if that is any warranty of success. Dr. Wilbur has a very extensive practice."

"I s'pose he's good as the average. 'Tain't much doctoring I ever have; and he can afford to run in now and then. The Lord's gin him enough to live on, and it's no more'n right he should use some on't in the Lord's service. But he's got his cross, like all the rest. That

sister o' his — if she ain't one of Satan's unaccountables, I'd like to know. But they do say he has all the patience in the world, and thinks heaps on her with all her tantrums. She's a sassy jade! Enough to spile a neighborhood. Seems strange how that gal o' Jim Brown's come to be so thick with her. Folks say they alwers have been since they were little children. I hope she won't turn round and go to 'busin' her when she gets older. Jennie's poor, and t'other's well off; and she may think, like the rest o' the world, that money's what makes folks. There's nothin' would stop her if she set out. Do, pray, put them lilies out of the way. I can't bear 'em! Let's see — ain't it about this time o' year Ben went off?"

"Yes. Ben has been gone twenty-three years to-morrow."

"I'd no idee 'twas so long. Strange we never heerd nothin' what become of him! I did want to see my boy once more; but I've about gin him up. Somehow it never seemed to wear on you. But gals get over such things quicker now. It alwers 'peared to me, that Captain Grey might a' got hold of somethin', if he had taken pains. I tried to find out by him every time he come home, but he never seemed to want to talk much. I used to think he was a leetle sweet on you, them days!

Wal, Ben was a good boy, if he was a leetle shifty, and treated me well when he was to home. But his father was a sailor afore him, and so was his granther; and it come jist as nat'ral for him to take to the water as it does to a duck; and critters as is made to live in water won't stay on land, whatever there is on it: leastways I ain't no opinion o' such folks."

Dear Aunt Mary! Had her faith in the sailor ever wavered? Did she never question the wisdom of that Providence which placed this burden in her path?

"May God forget me when I forget you or yours!"

Only God and herself knew how faithfully had been kept the promise.

## CHAPTER XVI.

"Twin rosebuds crushed; ye say 'tis so,  
But err ye not the while?  
Methought I heard a tender voice,  
Like Day's departing smile,  
As though an angel stooped to say  
Heaven's message to the sons of clay."

**T**HE season following was one long to be remembered in Millbrook.

In the short space of three weeks, the church-bell sounded the death of twelve of its residents; and in the towns adjoining, the scourge proved equally fatal. Scarlet fever, that most dreaded of diseases, swept among us, withering and blighting all in its course. It laid a relentless hand on rich and poor, in the lowly hut and in the home of affluence, showing no favor and heeding no censure.

Charlie worked night and day. It seemed as if human nature must give way with the long-continued strain, which gave no respite to either mind or body; but while the fever raged, an unseen strength seemed lent him to grapple with the foe.

Mr. Kingsley was out of town, having left Millbrook at the close of his summer term, to be absent during the vacation, and gone no one knew whither, else the burden resting upon Charlie might have been in some measure lightened, as he had already come to place large dependence on his medical student.

The two younger children of Mr. Brown — twins — were among the first victims to the disorder; and, as was usual in all such emergencies, their mother went directly home, taking the others with her, to prevent contagion; and so the care of both rested entirely upon Jennie, who, from the first moment, devoted herself entirely to the comfort of her charge.

Charlie spent every moment there possible, and his presence was no little relief. She could place not the least dependence upon the father. His presence seemed more an annoyance than otherwise; and he was but too glad to absent himself whenever any unusual occurrence rendered him liable to be called upon for extra exertion.

Charlie allowed me to spend every day in the sick-room, relieving me from the task as early in the evening as was possible for him to take my place.

On the third evening after the attack, he came in somewhat later than usual. Mr. Brown had risen from

his seat in the kitchen, and was about to retire for the night, seemingly without a care or thought for what the morrow might bring.

"I will call you, sir, if there is any change for the worse," whispered Charlie, who had followed me to the outer door, and noticed what preparations Mr. Brown was making.

A low, muttered "Humph!" was the only reply.

He repeated the words interrogatively, but succeeded no better in eliciting an answer than at first.

"Your wife might wish to know, if there seemed no possible chance for recovery. Would it not be well to send for her, or tell her? Then she could act her own pleasure."

"No use getting the rest of 'em back to be sick, for the sake o' having her here. I guess they'll do well enough."

"But, sir, they are very ill. I think it hardly possible both will be living in the morning. The little girl has failed rapidly since I saw her last."

Another grunt, and a few muttered words to the purport that "girls were of no great account any way," and he shuffled off up stairs!

I did not wait for Charlie to reply; I was too angry.

"So Jennie is of no account!" I put in, indignantly;

"she's worth all the boys you ever had put together! Wonder what he thinks the rest would do if —"

"Hush, sister! remember where you are, and what brought you here. Good night. Don't forget any precaution I have given you." He bent to kiss me, then went back to Jennie.

How slowly dragged the hours to her who watched so anxiously for any faint sign whereon to build one single ray of hope! In vain Charlie urged her to leave them for a little while during the early part of the night, and try to get some rest. She would not listen to a word of it; and her quick eye saw the change midnight brought, long before he could gather courage to speak of it.

"Don't call him — please don't!"

Charlie had left his seat, and stood hesitating at the door. He came back without a word.

"How long, doctor, do you think?" She did not even raise her eyes from the little one who lay gasping in her lap.

"A few minutes at the longest. She is free from pain; thank God for that!"

With her own hands she closed the lifeless eyes, kissed together the pale lips, and laid the babe in its cradle. An hour later, the other was placed beside it. The twins had begun another life together.

"Beautiful in life, in death not divided!" whispered Charlie, drawing Jennie from the cradle, where she stood like a statue, gazing with fixed, tearless eyes, unable to move or stir, now that her work was accomplished. He led her unresisting from the room, and arranged a pillow on the sofa for her.

"You must rest now, if you would not be sick yourself."

"Don't keep me here! Let me go back — I must go back!"

"Not there, Jennie; they have no need of your care. I will stay with you, but you must sleep now."

"I cannot!"

"Will you try, darling — if not for your own sake, will you not for mine?" He paused suddenly; he crushed back the words which would have followed, and held them by his strong will: this was no time or place for words his heart ached to express. She was a child to him — a child in years, but old in that life which is counted by heart-throbs.

Very gently, very tenderly, he placed her on the sofa, and, clasping the weak, trembling fingers in his own, knelt by her side, and commended the weary, burdened heart to God. She was weeping softly when

he rose; she had found at last a blessed relief in tears. He did not try to check them; he only drew a chair by her side, and repeated, in low, soothing tones, —

“Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.

“In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.

“I go to prepare a place for you.”

She was sleeping quietly when he paused, and he was alone — alone with his own thoughts, to meet his own burden as best he might.

## CHAPTER XVII.

“I feel death rising higher still and higher  
Within my bosom; every breath I fetch  
Shuts up my life within a shorter compass,  
And like the vanishing sound of bells, grows less  
And less each pulse, till it be lost in air.”

THE malady at last reached its height. Then Nature demanded payment for her debt, and brother Charlie resigned himself to a foe he was powerless to elude. In a single hour, from the full strength of manhood to the weakness and helplessness of infancy!

Returning at noon from a visit to one of his charge, he left his horse at the door uncared for, and beckoning me to follow, went direct to his room. Perhaps he noticed the pale face raised to his with eager questioning, for the self-sacrificing spirit ruled even here.

“Don’t be alarmed, dear. I should not have startled you thus. I am not quite well; perhaps it will pass off after an hour’s rest. I wanted to tell you there was something I wished you to know.”

"What is it, Charlie, troubles you? Speak; I can bear anything, everything for you."

"In a moment; wait a little;" and he pressed both hands over the throbbing temples, then tottered across the room, and tried to open his desk.

I sprang to his side, and seizing the key from his trembling fingers, threw back the lid. Only a single package was revealed; the same he brought from Uncle Jack's den, and placed there, the night of his death.

"They are the papers given me by Captain Grey. Promise that in any event, if I am absent, you will fulfil his dying wish, and leave nothing undone that he expressed as his desire in his last will."

"O, Charlie, Charlie! what are you saying? Hush, if you would not kill me."

"Be calm, sis. You understood what I said, and comprehended all its import; answer, as in God's sight: will you do as I bid you?"

I suppose I gave him the required promise. I had but one thought then — the thought that he was going from me; and I grasped him with both hands, as if my little strength was sufficient to compete with the Destroyer.

"My child! my pet! my sister! God bless you, and keep you, and bring us together at last — at last!"

The words seemed to linger long upon his lips, and then he was unconscious.

I heard a step in the hall, which I recognized as Jennie's, and screamed for help. Before she reached the room, I had fallen senseless at his side.

I woke again to find Mrs. Hall, and the doctor whom they summoned, bending over me; to see Jennie watching by the bedside opposite, outwardly calm, but with a face not less pale than that on which she gazed.

"Hush! do not try to rise. You must be quiet; your life and his depend upon it."

Heedless of his words, I made a second attempt, and would have spoken, but he stopped me. His voice was stern when he added, —

"You must obey me. You have endangered one life already; see that you take better care in future. Drink this;" and too weak to resist, I drained the cup he held to my lips.

It was morning when I woke from the deep sleep that followed. The others were there, as on the evening previous. With the calmness of despair, I arose from the sofa, and took Jennie's place, motioning her to the one I left.

The stern face of the old physician relaxed a little while he watched me tenderly doing every-

thing for the relief of the sufferer that love could suggest.

"'Tis more than half to meet danger bravely," he said. "I will not attempt to deceive you; his life hangs upon a thread. Nothing but the utmost care will avail; but while there is life there is hope."

Was his life, then, in such extreme peril?

"God save him!" — the cry went up from the very depths — "take anything, everything else, but spare him. Jennie, he will hear you; make him save my brother!"

She made no answer, but silently, with clasped hands, knelt by the bedside.

What was it, coming back in a flood of bitter memories — the words of young Mr. Fenn, "Refuse not, lest he take your idol from you; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also?"

Was the Shepherd about to take my idol to himself to lead me to the kingdom? I threw myself by Jennie's side, and pledged a life's devotion to God's service if this one desire of my heart might be granted. The vow was registered in heaven, and the wheels of destiny rolled back once more in answer to the breath of prayer.

"Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

"Jennie, you could not feel that, could not say it, were he your brother. He is all I have. How can you know?"

A sigh was her answer. Her heart knew its own bitterness. Was her love the less because too sacred to speak of?

So a week passed by. Though both of us were unrecognized by him, yet he seemed satisfied only when we ministered to his wants. 'Twas little either could do; but no hour, night or day, found us inactive.

The doctor had expressly forbidden any visitors to the room, urging upon us the necessity of perfect quiet. Numerous were the kindly offers of assistance, which we could not accept; but no service was withheld which was possible to be rendered by the many friends among whom he had been so long and so favorably known.

Old Hannah Ring was not lacking in a sympathy of her own kind. Her well-known voice was among the first I recognized in the office after the news of Charlie's dangerous illness became public. Without a word of her intention, she started direct up stairs before the astonished housekeeper could find voice to speak. I met her at the door of Charlie's room, and

took a position at once which prevented all possibility of her entrance.

Always ready, the words which fell from her lips would have fallen as healing balm, coming from any other source, but my eyes were opened to the deceitfulness of appearances. Finding that her subtle artifice was without weight, she instantly changed her tactics, averring that for Jennie's sake she was ready to make any sacrifice, and throwing out various hints as to the propriety of so young a person, not a member of the family, acting in so important a capacity, censuring, at the same time, any and all who would insinuate or repeat any slanderous reports. She then closed by renewed offers of assistance.

With a quiet superiority, which seemed to look above and beyond the speaker, Jennie regarded the whole with indifference; while I, no less indignant, but possessed of none of her self-control, seized the door to shut it in her face with a violence that would have echoed over the whole house had not Jennie anticipated the movement in time to prevent it.

The crisis came at last, — the hour so anxiously looked for, so fearfully dreaded.

"If midnight finds him sleeping, we may dare to

hope," the doctor said; "but we must be prepared for the worst. To you two, if he lives, he will owe his life."

I could not but remember his other words, the night of his first visit, —

"You have endangered one life already." If he died, would he owe that to me also?

The shrill whistle of the night express, miles away, told that the hour of midnight was nearing; and this was the end of that Saturday to which Jennie and I looked forward as the day which would bring Mr. Kingsley back to Millbrook and school duties.

The church clock struck twelve. A Sabbath had begun for Charlie, even upon earth. I could have shouted at the sound of the last stroke of the bell. It was as if one was restored from the grave. I looked at the doctor, at Mrs. Hall, at Jennie, and turned with a new fear to the pallid face upon the pillow. Every breath was growing shorter; the intervals between were lengthening.

"He is dying! he is gone!" I gasped, as a slight tremor passed over him, and all was still. "He shall not leave me!" In an agony, I threw myself by his side, and begged him to come back.



There was a sound of horse's hoofs upon the gravel, a hasty step, clearing the stairs three at a bound; then strong arms gathered me up; a tender voice was in my ear, which sounded far away, as if coming from unfathomable depths,—

"My Fannie! my darling! would to God I had died in his stead for your sake!" and then — blessed oblivion.

### CHAPTER XVIII.

"That from our door to the place of graves  
The path is yet untrod,  
That we have not pressed upon his breast  
The icy burial sod,  
That he sleepeth, and waketh, and is not dead,  
We bless thee, O our God!"

"JENNIE!"

"Fannie, dearest, do you know me?" She left her seat and came to my side.

"How long?"

"What? that you've been here? Less than two weeks. Did you think it longer? But I forget; I mustn't let you talk, but do all the talking that is necessary myself. Mr. Kingsley is family physician now, and I shall have to report to him."

Then it all came back, and throwing my arms about her neck, I burst into convulsive sobs.

"Don't, Fannie! You must not; it will make you sick, this excitement. Mr. Kingsley will be very an-

gry, for he cautioned me against anything of this kind."

"There it is again! Never speak his name in my hearing, if you would not kill me. I care nought for his opinion or commands." With all my weakness the old spirit was there. "I care for nothing, have nothing to care for me. O, Charlie!"

"Hush, do! and try to quiet yourself, for your brother's sake, if nothing more. He will be anxious if he hears you."

"What? What do you say?"

"Your brother has been very near the grave, and is now very ill, though out of danger. He has had a relapse of fever since you saw him; now go to sleep, that's a dear, good Fan, and by and by I will tell you all about it."

"Tell me now! Am I dreaming? Have I been? Is it true that Charlie is here—that he lives? You are not deceiving me!"

"Deceiving you? For what?"

"I thought he was dead. I thought I saw him die; you know when. You saw him too, and then—I can't remember what came next. How was it. Where is he?"

"In his room. Now don't talk any more. I have told you truly. Mr. Kingsley will be in soon, and call us both to account, if we persist in disobeying orders."

"Let him fuss. I must know. I'm not tired, or sleepy, or sick; and if you want to keep me still, you must do as I say, and answer all my questions. My own darling brother! I must go and see him this very minute. I could get up and walk a mile for one look at his dear face."

"I believe you are crazy, Fannie. I'll tell you a little on just this one condition—that you don't speak another word." She brought a pillow for herself, and arranged it beside mine, then told briefly what I begged so earnestly to know.

Mr. Kingsley had arrived not one moment too soon. Some trifling accident detained a train on which he was passenger, so that he arrived in Boston too late to leave in the afternoon, as we expected. His first thought was to remain there until Monday. By the merest accident, he learned, at a late hour, of Charlie's dangerous illness, and that it was the night which was to decide between life and death. He had just time to despatch a telegram to Cedarville for a horse to be saddled and in waiting for him at the moment of the

arrival of the midnight express, and gain a seat in the train.

Charlie had often spoken of the rare skill with which he seemed to meet every case of fever that came in the range of their united efforts; but no one was prepared to witness what could be looked upon as little less than a miracle. It seemed as if for a while the very keys of death were delivered into his hand.

To him, under God, we owed this great debt. Could I ever repay it? So the unkind thoughts cherished a few moments before gave way, and when, a half hour later, Mr. Kingsley left my brother to look after his other charge, he found us both, Jennie and I, asleep in each other's arms.

From the refreshing slumber that followed I did not wake till a late hour the next morning. Jennie had left my side long before, and when I opened my eyes, was quietly moving about, arranging the room, and putting things to rights. I watched her in silence, removing from the table near the bottles and glasses, the contents of which had been used for my benefit, and noted with pleasure the astonishing decrease in their number. The finishing touches were hardly completed before Mr. Kingsley, book in hand, came in.

A quiet good morning to Jennie, a few questions relative to the manner in which I passed the night, then expressing his pleasure that my sleep was prolonged to so late an hour, and hoping it would continue through the day, he bade her go below for rest and refreshment.

"I was just gallant enough, and hungry enough, to stop and make sure of my own breakfast first. You must excuse me. I left everything so you will find it warm. A nice steak, with all the whereas and afore-saids belonging thereto. I cooked it myself, and can assure you I gave it a fair trial. Mrs. Hall is with the doctor; so don't hurry yourself in the least, but take as long time as you wish. I'll look after the "sleeping beauty" meanwhile, and attend to her welfare. Mrs. Hall made arrangements for her comfort, in case she should wake up and find herself in a starving condition, as I prophesied. I don't know but I was too hasty in changing my course of treatment; it might have been better for all around, to have her *statu quo*, a few days longer."

"Sleeping beauty, indeed! kept so by his course of treatment. Why didn't he keep me asleep with some outlandish dose the rest of my natural life? Why

couldn't I have known all the while, and kept awake just out of spite? No, sir, you don't play that card any longer!" And with these thoughts I opened my eyes, and fixed them full upon him in one prolonged stare.

He returned the look with a quizzical expression, then quietly asked, —

"How is Miss Fannie?"

"Well enough! Will you tell me what time it is?"

"Nearly ten."

"I would like you to call Mrs. Hall. Do you hear?" after waiting some time for a reply. "I want her to help me dress, and then I'm going to see Charlie, while she gets me some breakfast. I'm hungry as a bear; forgetting my resolve, a few moments before, to starve as long as possible, and so prove him a false prophet in that respect.

"I left the doctor asleep, and couldn't think of having him disturbed. You will be willing to wait if it is for his benefit." His voice was gentle in its subdued pleading. "He has been very ill, and is now just gaining a little. Sleep is the best medicine he can have for the present. Are you feeling better?"

"I don't know as I'm feeling better or worse, or anything else in particular. I've always felt well enough."

"Very good. Am glad to hear it. I'll report your convalescence to the doctor; it will bring him over one notch, at least, to hear so favorable a report;" and he was about to resume his book.

"Look here, Mr. — Will; do you know I commissioned you to call Mrs. Hall, a minute ago. Better look over your list of curatives, and see what you can find that will jog your memory a little."

"Mrs. Hall is with your brother."

"You can take her place."

"It might annoy him."

"Then call somebody else. Where's Jennie? I won't keep her long. But I'm going to dress, so as to be all ready to see Charlie the minute he opens his eyes."

"Not to-day, Fannie. Don't urge the matter farther. Wait till you are both stronger. It would make you sick, and I wouldn't answer for the consequences to him. You must be patient a little while."

"I don't believe a word you say — not one single word. I'm going to take care of him myself. I'm no more sick than you are; and he — it won't hurt him for me to take care of him, any more than for anybody else."

"Don't make me unkind. If you won't listen to reason, I must, as your physician and his, positively forbid you to leave the room, or see him, till I give

you permission. It would give me the greatest pleasure to take you to him this moment; but it would be at the sacrifice of one life, at the least. Better a little while than a lifetime without him."

Jennie had told me of the dangerous relapse which followed the first attack. Was it really so much worse than I knew? and he — Mr. Kingsley — he saved him. Where was my gratitude for this great indebtedness?

"I will wait for his sake, and because you wish it."

"Thank you. But 'tis only for his sake I desire it. You shall see him as soon as possible."

"How long?"

"Sunday, perhaps. You must try and get strong so I can deliver you up to him in good condition. We must coax a few roses back first. He won't have any of his own for a long time to come."

"Hear the man talk! One would think that Charlie was on the boundary-line of the other world, to hear you. I shouldn't be surprised to see him walk right in here before Sunday comes."

"Not before snow flies. I'm thankful he is off the boundary-line at last. I have thought him the other side many times since you saw him. I don't know what has kept him here. Jennie says 'God's loving

kindness.' I suppose he will say the same, when his strength is sufficient to allow him to speak. What do you say?"

I made no answer. I was thinking of the promise made that first night of his illness, when I knelt by his side, and cried unto God in my anguish.

He changed the conversation to more trivial matters; told something of his journey during the vacation; of the news in Millbrook; talked of the school-term, not yet begun; and brought me back very soon to a realizing sense of my own needs and wishes.

"You are getting tired. A real healthy kind of tired, too. You must have some breakfast, and then shut your eyes, and say the multiplication table up to the twelves, and forget your troubles. I'll go and see what Jennie has left you."

My sharpened appetite was not lessened by waiting, and visions of steak and the good things I heard enumerated, as comprising a part of the bill of fare recommended to Jennie, floated through my mind during his absence. He came back in a merry mood, with a fragment of song upon his lips, —

"Man wants but little here below,  
Nor wants that little long."

"That doesn't suit my case, for I want a good deal, and want it a good while."

He placed the waiter he brought beside me.

I gave one hasty glance; the next instant one broken dish was rolling upon the floor, its contents with it, and the other flying across the room.

He looked up surprised and angry, for a moment, then burst out laughing.

"For shame! you provoking, hateful torment! It's just like you, for all the world. I wonder if ever anybody was sick and went on half rations twenty-four hours, that somebody didn't bring the inevitable toast and tea prescribed for invalids. I won't touch it! I won't even eat a morsel of it! and you needn't ask me. I'll go without anything, and starve, first! 'Tis well enough for you to laugh, with a quarter of beef for your breakfast, and another quarter cooking for your dinner. You promised to bring me some like what the rest had, and now try to put me off with this!"

He was gathering up the pieces while I was speaking, laughing immoderately.

"Not quite twelve baskets full," he said; "and not your fault. You did what you could, and surrendered everything, even all your living. What do you propose doing next?"

"I'm going to have my breakfast, and a double allowance, too; it's noon this very minute. Now go and get what you promised."

"I am not aware that any promise has been made."

"You are! You said you would bring what Jennie left. Now go and get it."

"Go and get what?"

"Get what I tell you to! I'll turn cannibal, and eat you alive, in ten seconds. Some steak, and all the fixings!"

"What?"

"You know! I heard what you told her, every single word. Your soothing sirup fell a little short of your calculations. I was wide awake all the time as you are this minute. Say, will you get me something to eat?"

He left the room, but returned presently.

"Bring it here, right off!"

"Will you listen to reason, and act like a sensible child?"

"When I'm starved to death I shan't want it. What did you get?"

"The same as before."

"I won't touch it."

"Very well!"

"Will you get me something else?"

"I dare not, Fannie!"

Child-like, I burst into tears. I did not know how weak I had become in those few days; not only weak, but nervous and irritable. He soothed me even as Charlie would have done; not less kindly, not less patiently; then placed the food he brought before me. I turned from it, not angrily, but with loathing.

"Eat something, Fannie. Try, just to please me."

There was no answer.

"Will you for your own good, for Charlie's sake?"

"For Charlie's sake" I tried to swallow a little, then pushed it from me, and turned away.

Not till Sunday came, and I attempted to dress, and make myself presentable for the promised visit to Charlie, did I come to realize the full extent of my own weakness. It was a long hour I spent at my simple toilet; one which, in ordinary cases, would have required but a few minutes. The wished-for moment came at last, and Jennie opened the door. I started to follow her, but miscalculated my strength, and leaned heavily against the wall, where her help scarce enabled me to keep from falling. Mr. Kingsley appeared at the moment.

"Why did you not call me?"

"I thought I could go myself;" and I made a second attempt to leave the room.

"Let me assist you. I brought you here when you came, soul, body, and appetite. 'Tis no more than fair I should deposit you again where I found you." He lifted me as before, then carried me to Charlie's room, and placed me on the bed beside him.

If surprised at my own infirmity, how much more surprised now! The room was darkened, so that some moments passed before I could plainly discern the outline of the face beside me. I was prepared for a change, but not for such a change. Fear only kept me from screaming outright.

Mr. Kingsley brought a wine-glass, and placed the spoon in my hand.

"I was just about to give him his breakfast," he said, "but will resign that office to you. Don't let him have too much; half this will answer — will it not, doctor?"

I looked from one to the other, and then at the liquid he held in his hand.

"You must own your rations compare favorably with this allowance. Next time we'll put you on this course of diet, and make you appreciate past favors. Why

don't you give him a taste? Don't you see he is waiting?"

"What do you mean, you cruel wretch? This his breakfast? I'll get him some myself. You ought to be hanged. It's worse than the heathen. My poor Charlie!"

He had just strength to place a hand upon my head, and whisper the blessing I had heard at table so many times from his lips. Then Mr. Kingsley took the spoon from my fingers, to perform what I was powerless to do.

Weeks — months glided by.

It was midwinter. Another birthday anniversary found me restored to health and a full measure of strength. The intervening time was spent mostly with Charlie. It was my own choice, soon as my own health was established, to wait on and care for him. His recovery was gradual; but every week marked some improvement.

On this day, the 15th of January, he came down stairs for the first time; and I found him in the old office chair, when I went, as was my usual custom, to arrange the books and dust the furniture after Mr. Kingsley's departure for school.

I could not yet claim my old seat, however much I desired it; but I drew a stool to his side, and, seating myself upon it, laid my head in his lap. There were threads of silver now in the dark wavy locks and beard; but the face was not less dear, nor the look that met my own less kind, than formerly.

"Read to me, sis;" and he put his Bible in my hand.

"Vow, and pay unto the Lord thy vows," he repeated slowly, after I finished reading and closed the book. "Has my sister any vows registered in heaven unfulfilled? God has been very merciful to us both. Shall not the lives he has spared be consecrated to his service?"

Again I remembered that vow at his bedside, broken, alas! A merciful Father had heard my cry, and given him back from the very valley of the shadow. My prayer was answered, my *idol* restored to me. My treasure was mine again, even in this world, and, alas, for me! my heart was here also.



## CHAPTER XIX.

"The union of lakes, the union of lands,  
The union of states, none may sever;  
The union of hearts, the union of hands,  
And the 'Flag of our Union' forever!"

A CRY went over the land! A sound of the hymn of blood! Sumter had fallen!

From east to west was heard a nation's wail of unutterable horror! In village and hamlet, wherever trod the feet of men, resounded the echo of the blast of war!

Following close after, a call for help, another cry pulsating from the heart of government, and seventy-five thousand of our bravest troops hastened to the scene of conflict.

Joe was among those first to respond. Turning his back directly upon college walls, he hurried home, and his name headed the list of Millbrook volunteers.

Acting upon the impulse of the moment, Mr. Kings-

ley would have placed his own beside it; but Charlie, less hasty in resolves, though not in the performance of duty, advised him to wait, and give the matter further consideration before deciding on so important a step.

"If, as many suppose, this national trouble is to be settled soon, your country can well excuse you from the field; but, on the other hand, if our land is to be deluged in blood, ours must be a different work. I would not advise you contrary to your own sense of duty. Go, if you feel that you ought, if you think the right requires it; but where a thousand can be found ready and efficient for active service in the field, we shall hardly find one competent to meet the demands in our hospitals."

Joe came to spend a part of his last evening with us before starting for camp. There was little about him to remind one of the Joe of former years. He looked every inch a soldier in his suit of blue, standing full six feet high, every gesture bold, kingly, careless, and all a soldier's daring written in every feature.

I preceded him to the hall while he was taking his leave of the others, receiving a hearty God-speed from Charlie, and a warning from Mr. Kingsley not to

show himself again in Millbrook without a shoulder-strap.

"Don't be shot in the back, Joe. Open your mouth, and catch the balls!"

"All I stop in that way shall be forwarded immediately to the home-guards. You may look for the first one as soon as you hear of an engagement. I shall set my trap at sound of the first gun!"

He followed me a moment later, carefully closing the door behind him, then, taking a shawl from the rack near, threw it over my shoulders, set the lamp I held upon the table, and blew out the light.

"Many the times, as you may remember, that I've seen you home safely, darker evenings than this, too; and 'tis no more than fair you should return the compliment," he said, leading me to the gate. "My first prisoner of war!"

"Bravely done!" I responded, laughing. "You should have a pension settled upon you immediately, as a reward for gallantry. But where are you going?" for he had started in an opposite direction from that where his home lay!

"Never late till the moon sets. Longest way round is the safest way home, sometimes; and a walk this fine evening won't hurt either. It will be a long time

before I shall have another opportunity like the present, and I intend to improve it to the utmost."

"I guess you won't be troubled for want of exercise when you get where the shot and shell are flying. You'll have plenty to do, dodging them daytimes, and soaking your hard-tack by moonlight."

"Not a bit of it. I shall live on the fat of the land when I get over the line, and pitch my camp-fires amongst southern vegetation. My advice to the gentry there is, to fence in their gardens, and elevate their hen-roosts, if they don't want to wake up in the morning and find their chickens all dead, and in their grav-ies."

"So you are going to turn land-pirate, and hide your sins under the flag of your country, you lawless marauder. We shall all be thankful when the morrow comes, and Millbrook is well rid of such a set of villains, though there'll be plenty left to fit out another regiment, if the country demands it."

"Come, come, Fan, don't get personal; we shall come to battle before we know it. We've been remarkably good-natured for us so far. I take a little more than half the credit to myself. We must not spoil it all by finishing up with a quarrel. I suppose the doctor will help fill the next quota, and Mr. Kingsley,

perhaps. Then what pet names will you find by which to designate that company, if you use them all up for this one?"

"Never, Joe! My brother shall never go to war. Let those who started it fight it out to suit themselves; but he shan't stand up for a mark for rebel bullets. I'd see the whole country go to smash first."

"Careful! The days are not distant when it will be unsafe to make such a statement as that publicly. I hardly think it would do now, in some places. You don't mean a word of it, either. You would fight like a tiger yourself for the cause of freedom. You would sacrifice anything for the Union."

"Not that. I love my country, but I love my brother more. Not even to save the Union would I let him take his chances upon the field."

"We are going to do it, and have fathers, mothers, and sisters to leave behind, to whom our lives are as dear as his to you."

"You can go if you want to; it is your own choice. Nobody forced you to enlist. But if everybody else goes, Charlie never shall. If you or they want to be shot, I'm willing. 'Tis nothing to me."

"Nothing to you? O, Fan, take that back! You must take that back! Nothing to you? You cannot mean it!"

"But I do mean it, every word. I tell you once for all, I would see this government come to nought, and under the rule of any foreign power on earth before I would see him, my brother, all I have in the world, on a battle-field."

"Blind idolatry!" he muttered. I winced at the word. "And yet you are so indifferent to your neighbors that you are willing to have them shot, and say it is nothing to you. O, Fan, I have hoped so long it was otherwise, ever since we were little children. I can't remember when I didn't cherish these day-dreams of the future, with you the centre of them all! You do care!" He stopped, and seized both my hands. "You shall not go another inch till you take back those fearful words!"

I turned directly about, and started homeward.

"What do you mean?" I asked. "I don't comprehend one word you are saying."

"Have you forgotten so soon? Then it is proof that you spoke thoughtlessly; that your words have no meaning. I didn't wish to say it here, or now. I wanted to wait till by and by, when I could offer something besides my poor, worthless self; but you force me to the truth. Fannie, I think—I believe I

could lay down my life for *you*, and you say you don't care; that it is nothing to you whether I live or die."

It was all plain then — all that seemed so blind before. I started to fly from him, but he held me back.

"Don't, Fan; there is no need for such haste. I ask nothing in return — not yet. Could I be assured that at some future day, however distant, the one tenth part of my love would be reciprocated, I would go to a soldier's life and a soldier's fare content; as it is, I can carry the hope with me."

I tried to speak — tried to tell him how useless. I would have explained that with me love was all an enigma, except the love I gave Charlie, and the tender affection which existed between Jennie and myself; but the words died on my lips.

The remainder of the walk was a silent one. It seemed to me that it would never come to an end, and I felt as if years had rolled over my head when we stopped at the gate before the door.

He seized my hand at parting, and wrung it till I almost cried out with the pain it gave me. The sight of his face brought back my voice, but not the words I would have spoken at first.

"Good by, Joe. I hope you will be content there, and come back again by and by, crowned with the laurels of victory."

Again he wrung the hand he still retained in his, pressed it to his lips, and was gone.

## CHAPTER XX.

"Cannon to right of them,  
 Cannon to left of them,  
 Cannon in front of them,  
     Volleyed and thundered.  
 Not theirs to reason why,  
 Not theirs to make reply —  
     Theirs but to do and die."

**W**EEKS passed by, comparatively quiet to those who remained in Millbrook, away from the sound of strife. But every mail brought its store of news, and every letter and paper was eagerly watched for, and as eagerly read.

That the conflict would end in three months was soon discovered to be a delusion, and the essential thing to be accomplished was not to be achieved by an idle encampment about the capital. A blow must be struck somewhere, and the Confederate force, gathered for the capture of Washington, be dispersed before that city could be considered safe.

Joe waited impatiently for the word that should bring the two armies into conflict. The little affrays continually occurring were far from satisfactory to him, and the burden of all his letters was a complaint at the passive resistance of our troops, whose term of enlistment was rapidly drawing to a close, without having accomplished any important result.

Joe's letters, though invariably sent in my name, were addressed to the family, and perused by brother Charlie and Mr. Kingsley with as much interest as by myself. His glowing accounts of army life and army fare were read with infinite amusement, no allusion being made to what passed between us the last evening of his stay in Millbrook.

Joe was, to use his own words, "spoiling for a fight."

"I care nothing that my term of enlistment expires within a week. I shall not turn my back upon the force of Confederates, posted along here for a distance of half a dozen miles, till I've had one taste of war. The attack has been delayed too long already, and several New York regiments insist upon leaving at the expiration of their term. In that event ten thousand of the best armed and best disciplined troops

will be wanting at the decisive moment. When these aimless plans and shifting lines of operation are absorbed into one straightforward path of action, we may hope to accomplish something—not much while we organize, discipline, march, and fight, all at the same time, with everything green!”

Another day brought to Joe the long-wished-for moment, and the night following closed on a hard-contested battle, witnessing the military triumph of the south in the defeat of the national army at Bull Run.

With news of this encounter came a package to Mr. Kingsley, forwarded by Joe—a rebel bullet, which, strange to say, he stopped with his teeth, and preserved as his first trophy of victory. If there was anything in the possession of which Joe prided himself, it was his teeth; and few saw them but pronounced his vanity excusable. A few hastily-written lines told of his safety and re-enlistment.

“I am *booked for the war*, be the time long or short, with promise of a furlough in which to repair the damages your bullet has been guilty of—the loss of the four grinders that stopped the ball; not much for the rebs to gain, but a good deal for me to lose;

though I would rather part with all that remain than see the old flag dishonored. . No, Fan, I don't believe you are half so much a Copperhead as your letters would seem to indicate. We shall yet see you a zealous worker for the Union. We can afford to bide the time, and have only to wait till you are brought to the point of sacrifice.”

Later papers gave more minute details of the deadly combat; and it was through that medium we learned of the rare courage and pluck Joe had taken with him to the field—a fearless daring, which led him to the very jaws of death to save the flag of his regiment from trailing in the dust, under the feet of the enemy.

Midday, of the 21st of July, found the Confederate troops on a broad table-land, elevated some one hundred and fifty feet above Bull Run, to which point they had been gradually driven back a mile and a half since morning, each step throwing them into greater confusion, and adding to the discouragement which already disheartened their forces. A lull in the Union attack at this critical moment afforded a golden opportunity to the anxious rebel generals, who, encouraged by re-enforcements, hastened to re-form and bring into action their broken troops!

Amid choking clouds of dust and dense columns of smoke, scorched by a merciless sun, the Union forces fought in general to sweep the enemy from the crest. For two hours the conflict raged, while backward and forward surged the opposing lines, till at three o'clock additional re-enforcements gave to the Confederates numerical equality, and at length superiority.

At that moment loud cheers were heard directly on the right and rear of the Union army, which had reached, and were struggling over, the ridge. Broken by advances and losses, they could not resist the cross-fire so suddenly hurled upon them, and instantly gave way in absolute disorder. With exulting shouts the enemy pressed forward in pursuit; but the battle was ended, save an occasional exchange of shot with the few stubborn regulars who covered the confused retreat.

At the last moment, when the enemy had already closed in behind the beaten army, and hundreds were throwing away property in their flight, Joe saw the standard-bearer of his regiment fling away the flag, to insure to himself, if possible, greater safety. Struggling back against the opposing tide to recover it, he received the fatal shot which deprived him of his teeth, and, winding the tattered remnant about his bleeding

face, bore it gallantly away, nor parted with it till he exchanged it for another, presented by his towns-people to the gallant captain who left Millbrook a few weeks later with his company of new recruits. For this manifest bravery had won for Joe a shoulder-strap, on which gleamed four gold embroidered bars, the emblem of his office.

## CHAPTER XXI.

"With brave, stout heart and patriot song,  
Liberty's legions go marching along."

ON a pleasant evening in the early fall, a large gathering assembled in the Millbrook Town Hall in honor of the heroes, who, two days later, were to leave their homes for a three years' absence; perchance longer, some of them; for the chances of war were too small to give much reason to hope they would all return an unbroken band.

Standing at the head of his company, who, rank and file, occupied the centre and rear of the hall, Joe received the flag, responding briefly to the charge preceding its presentation; and with a chorus of cheers for the Union it symbolized, followed by three times three for their captain, the crowd descended to the lower hall to partake of the rich collation provided there.

The last toast was proposed by Charlie — a tribute

to the memory of the first martyr of Millbrook, the drummer-boy, who fell on the very day his term expired.

The evening following found a goodly number at our house by invitation of brother Charlie. Mr. Kingsley was to leave with Joe the next morning, not as a soldier, nor for any definite period. From the day that the news of the fall of Sumter reached us, he and Charlie devoted themselves most assiduously to the study of surgery, and now only waited a call from the government for aid in that department.

For myself, I had used every argument that fear or love could invent to induce Charlie to give up this foolish whim, as I termed it, but all to no purpose. My selfish love could not fathom this great heart of his, which, though it withheld no share from me, was large enough to include both his country and his God.

For his sake, and that of the friends who were so soon to leave everything dear behind them, I exerted myself to entertain them, but I had no heart for anything. At that moment I would as willingly have seen one party victorious as the other, if by so being I could have known my brother would not be called to face the dangers I dreaded. Like a mere automaton, I joined



in all the games proposed, feeling not a passing interest in anything transpiring about me, until a question put to Mr. Kingsley by Jennie attracted my attention.

We were playing a game of forfeits, proposed by Joe in memory of the previous party and game which furnished once so much amusement. Mr. Kingsley was making the circuit of the room, and Jennie had repeated Joe's former question, asking his middle name.

With the remark that he would pay his indebtedness in the old coin, and must, for the same reason as before, caution her against looking at it, he drew forth and offered her the forfeit; then noticing the palor that overspread her face, he added, —

"Pardon me, Jennie. I have no right to withhold my confidence from one whom I can and do trust fully."

He turned in his fingers the glittering trinket he held, then, raising her hand, pressed it upon the back of it, and motioned us both to look.

It was a wreath, the counterpart of that on Jennie's seal, imprinted there, and in its centre the name '*Theodore*.'

She sat regarding it till the impress gradually faded out; then drawing nearer to me, she whispered, —

"I shall return his confidence by and by, when the party have left. Perhaps he can help solve this mystery which haunts me more and more every day. Do you think it any wrong to Uncle Jack's memory to show him the seal I have? I need not do more."

A proposal to separate prevented reply, and we arose to join in the adieus that followed.

Approaching us with the military salute with which a soldier meets his superior officer, Joe stooped to pick up the handkerchief at my feet, placed it in my hand, then withdrew it again after second thought, and put it in his own pocket.

"Don't dishonor the name stamped on it, Joe. If I hear of Captain Redfield displaying a flag of truce, I shall regret having parted company with it. You must leave it behind when you face the foe."

"I shall bear it with me to a soldier's grave, or return it again to your hand," he replied. "Good by, Fan."

He turned to leave the room; and quitting Jennie's side, I followed him out.

"I was about to offer my services as escort," I said when we reached the gate; "but as you seem to be well provided with a body-guard, I see my services will not be needed. I suppose that when you come

again you will have exchanged these bars for stars," pointing at the insignia of his office upon the shoulder-strap.

"And then, Fan — then? Have you no word for me beyond? I frightened you so before, I didn't mean to say a word this time; but 'tis often that we feel most when we say the least."

"Good by, Joe, in its broadest, fullest sense. God be with you." As a sister might, I returned the kiss he gave me at our last parting, three months before, then ran back to the house, and left him standing alone.

In the hall I met Mr. Kingsley.

"So our stray dove has returned to the ark again. 'Tis my last evening here for the present, and I could not retire without saying 'good night.'"

"Not yet, please, Will. Don't go now. Jennie wants to see you. She has something to show you. Have you seen her since they left? Did she tell you?"

"No, I've not seen her. I thought she went out with you. I might have known better. Intimates sometimes feel themselves *de trop* when they make a third party — eh, Fan?"

"Be still, you hateful old — Theodore. There; I said I would call you so if ever I found it out. We

shall have to cut off half; it's too big a mouthful when one is in a hurry. Come, Jennie is in the parlor."

I led the way back, and motioned him to a seat on the sofa beside her. He drew me to a place beside him.

"This suits my fickle fancy better. I don't wish any standing audience while Jennie and I occupy the floor. Now keep quiet till your turn comes. What is it, Jen? Fannie says you have something to tell me."

For reply she imprinted upon his hand the impress of her own seal.

"How could I have been so careless?" Then finding that his own was safe, he gave a second glance, and recognized the final letter of the name, which was the only point of difference between them.

It was several minutes before he found voice to speak; and then he put the questions so rapidly and confusedly that she was powerless to explain.

"How did you get it? When did you find it? Where is she? I have sought her on land and sea — have crossed every ocean, and visited every quarter of the globe. Tell me, quick, where did you get it?"

"My mother gave it to me upon her death-bed. She would have told me something had she lived a little longer. She died with some burden on her mind. I

think Uncle Jack knew. There was some mystery connected with his life, unexplained; and the secret was buried with them. Till now no one has known of its existence except Fannie. I knew not that its counterpart existed, till, in the forfeit you once paid me, I recognized it by the sense of touch alone, and fainted."

Over and over again she stated all she knew; and still he questioned, and cross-questioned, and could not be satisfied.

"And is this all? Was there nothing else?"

"A little mitten my mother kept it in. I used it for the same purpose myself a long time, but lost it after a while. I lost the seal, too, several times, but always found it. It has narrowly escaped destruction more than once. You must thank Fan for saving it in one perilous moment."

It was my hour of triumph when I pointed out the scar again, and bade him look at the result of my sacrifice.

"Had I not sprung forward at the risk of meeting your displeasure, you might never have known what you do now, which is little enough. It was worth a farm to cheat you so, and give you only *half* when you told me to bring the *whole* cause of the disturbance to the desk. I never quite got over the good that did

me; but I've always had a grudge against you since that day, and I suppose I always shall have. I set down a long, black mark against you at the time; and when I would have blotted it out, you told me you wasn't sorry. It stands there yet, longer and blacker than ever. Are you sorry now?"

He did not attempt a reply to my long harangue; he only folded caressingly in his the hand against which his own had once been lifted, and turned again to Jennie.

"And the mitten — what of that?"

"Only a little half-worn affair, originally white, with a narrow border, and part of the letter 'T' worked very irregularly upon the back."

"It was hers. She did it when the merest child, and I guided her needle through every stitch. The other, its mate, had the letter 'K.' They were her initials;" and for the second time I saw the tears gather in his eyes.

Hours after we heard him pacing his room backward and forward. He could not sleep in the presence of this new revelation; and it seemed as if years had been added to his life when he parted from us the next morning, and for a season turned his back upon Millbrook.

## CHAPTER XXII.

"O, what shall I be at fifty,  
If Nature keeps me alive,  
If I find the world so bitter  
When I am twenty-five!"

A FEW weeks later Jennie came in with a letter in her hand. It was postmarked Washington, and the envelope bore both our names in the peculiar chirography of Mr. Kingsley.

WASHINGTON, D. C., October, 1862.

MY DEAR FRIENDS: Every day this week have said to myself, "I must write to Millbrook this evening;" but the hours, as they came, brought each its duty with it; so the letter-writing was deferred for a more convenient season.

To-day have seen and talked with our president. It was a pleasure to look in his face. I hardly think he will ever be hanged for his beauty, though he may die a martyr for the cause he loves so well. My first

thought was — unlike myself — "Here is a man whom the people can trust! Honest old Uncle Abe! Long may he wave!"

You have told me often that I always look for the worst side of everybody. Please note the above, and give the devil his due.

Spent an hour with Captain Redfield yesterday. He says the army of the Potomac has acquired a strength of more than one hundred and sixty thousand. They expect to advance against the enemy at Manassas within a month. He is impatient to go. To use his own words, "I wish they would let go the brakes, and set this train in motion."

War! war! war! is the universal cry. Throughout the city there is nothing else to be heard, go where you will; but it is not my purpose to discuss that question here; the subject is too familiar over all our land. I find myself wandering back to the early years of my life, the days which I would fain bury in oblivion, since their memory can never be aught but a sad retrospect, the hopes of my boyhood and youth having perished with the experience of manhood.

My father was a sea captain, and until his death his brother, the uncle after whom I was named, sailed with

him. After that time he succeeded to the command, my mother and her children, as before, making the vessel their home. Some years later my mother again married, this time also a sea captain, and leaving me to the guardianship of my uncle, sailed with her husband, who was master of an East India merchantman, taking my sister, the little Theodora, with her. I never saw them more! My mother died a year later, on board the ship Sea-foam, bound for Boston; and the child—I never knew what became of her. My parents, all my kindred, so far as I know, have found their grave in the sea. Do you wonder that I abhor the very name? Could I be assured that she, my little Dora, slept there also, life would have lost half its bitterness.

To find her, to ascertain something of her fate, has been the one object of my life; for that I have sacrificed everything. With only one single link on which to build my slender hope, I have travelled the world over, have visited every seaport town on this coast.

She inherited from our mother all a German's native love for music, and at the age of three years could sing or whistle any tune she ever heard on shipboard. It was my especial delight to teach her the latter, and

one little German song we used to sing together was the favorite of both. It was composed in two parts. You have heard the first. I sing it everywhere, hoping against hope that the sweet, sad refrain may be caught up in that childish whistle. I know she will remember it, though she lives to be a hundred years old.

You know now why the name you sought to learn was so long withheld. Its utterance will never cease to recall sad memories of the lost. She was my idol, and only those who have lived on shipboard, with the wide waste of waters closing all around, know how dear such single companionship may become. They call me cold, hard, reticent. I recall only the comparatives; Madam Ring, or any of her kin, can furnish the "superlatives" by which I have been qualified in Millbrook.

I have learned to hope for nothing, to trust in nothing. Even death, the destroyer, has failed to be kind to me. A score of years have been counted since last I saw her, and the present day, if she is living, makes her four and twenty.

I have only to regret that the revelations made that last evening I was with you came so late. "Uncle Jack" might have known—The very thought is a mockery.

I shall leave Washington for New York next week. Any favors sent to that city within a fortnight will be duly received and appreciated.

Give kind regards to Mrs. Hall and the doctor.

I am very truly your

BROTHER WILL.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

"Where breathes the foe but falls before us,  
With Freedom's flag beneath our feet,  
And Freedom's banner waving o'er us!"

THE beginning of the year 186— saw in the west a formidable armament ready to move against the enemy. The fall of Donelson was like the removing of the keystone from the Confederate system of defence in that vicinity, in that it brought the whole structure in ruin to the ground.

The surrender of Nashville followed as an inevitable consequence, and as a result, the capture of Island No. Ten a few weeks later, and the surrender of Fort Pillow, the Mississippi was opened to Memphis.

It was in the West that the army first became what an army should be — a centre of human force; and in the campaign from Grand Gulf to Vicksburg this degree of perfection was first manifested.

While in the West the war-object was the opening of the Mississippi, no less universal was the cry in the

East, "On to Richmond." Major General George B. McClellan was assigned to the command of the military department of Washington immediately after the battle of Bull Run, and from resources furnished without stint at once commenced the organization of the great army authorized by Congress.

To increase the force of the army of the Potomac, all superfluous strength was transferred from the other armies, and everything concentrated in the force under his command. Never was army more lavishly equipped or bountifully supplied.

November came and went, and still the army of the Potomac had not moved. Winter set in, and nothing was accomplished, while in actual sight of the Capitol the Confederate flag was flying.

By and by came a letter from Joe, with explanation for his long silence:—

"I had resolved and re-resolved not to write again till I had something to say. The old, old story, 'All quiet on the Potomac,' needs no repetition. I wonder not that the public are both dissatisfied and alarmed, and blame neither officer nor private who criticises and censures the imposing reviews and military parades, which are all that break the monotony of this shameful inactivity. The prospect bids fair that we shall live,

and remain to reap the benefit of the shade trees our hands have planted about the camp.

"My 'flunky' sits here amusing himself with a *snail*, while I write. I need not add that the 'varmint' was *met*, not *overtaken*!

"We have moved, at last, far enough to verify the evacuation of Manassas, and examine the insignificant earth-works mounted with 'Quaker guns,' made of wood, which have kept the national army at bay so long. Till we face more dangerous weapons, you need have no fears that your brother's services will be needed in this vicinity."

Others letters, of later date, gave account of the movements that followed during the spring and summer following—the melancholy Peninsular expedition, where thousands sickened and died in the dismal trenches of Yorktown, the whole campaign ending in a complete triumph for the Confederacy, and the withdrawal of the army of the Potomac, by the national government, to the front of Washington.

Driven into their fortifications, the Confederate army had now a way open to the North, and at once proceeded to make an advance into Maryland.

No sooner was it ascertained with certainty that

Lee had crossed the Potomac, than orders were given McClellan to follow him with all troops not needed for the defence of Washington.

The battle of South Mountain was soon followed by the forcing of Turner's Gap, and Crampton's Gap, six miles below, simultaneously carried by Franklin, and the capture of Harper's Ferry by Jackson, who, delaying not to receive its surrender, hastened to assist Lee at the battle of Antietam, fought on the 17th of September.

The day closed without the well-marked results which might have been expected from the preponderance of the national force, — the troops, as on previous occasions, being used too much in detail, instead of overwhelming masses.

As before, the conduct of Joe won for him golden opinions from his superior officers. His courage was an inspiration to those who followed him in the charge against the enemy, who had taken position behind the breastwork Nature had laid up for them in a series of rocky ledges. Without thought of danger, wherever the contest raged in its hottest fury, Joe's voice rose above the din of battle, encouraging his men.

Through field and valley ploughed with artillery and

covered with the dying and dead, who lay in ranks so regular that it seemed as if the reaper must have mowed them down in swaths; through wood and grove, where every tree was pierced with shot and shell; past the little brick church, scarred and battered by thousands of bullets, — through the whole bloody massacre Joe went unscathed, while for more than a mile stood not a building but was rent and torn, and filled with the wounded and dying.

Early the next morning the soldiers, rising from their rest on the bare ground, made preparations for a renewal of the battle; but noon passed, and evening closed in; still no orders came for an attack. Another wearisome night, and another morning, and then the news was whispered that Lee had crossed the Potomac unmolested, and escaped into Virginia, making that river his line of defence.

So days and weeks went by, and while government vainly urged an advance, the Confederates were receiving re-enforcements, and actively engaged in re-organizing their troops.

After repeated procrastinations the forbearance of Lincoln at last gave way, and in November the command of the army was turned over to General Burnside.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

"Come; if you come not, I can wait;  
 My faith, like life, is long;  
 My will not little, my hope much;  
 The patient are the strong.  
 Before you now my heart lies bare!  
 Take it, or let it be:  
 It is an honest heart — and yours  
 To all eternity."

CAN I ever forget that day, every moment of which stands out in bold relief, reflected on the haze of memory!

It was ushered in by the ringing of bells and firing of guns, that proclaimed far and wide the success of our arms — the triumph of the Union army over the rebel force; but night brought other and heavier news to those who waited, in dread, to learn at what terrible sacrifice the victory was bought.

Thousands heard to whom each stroke of the bell was the knell of death, — wives made widows, and children fatherless.

At the twilight hour I went to meet Charlie. There

was no need for words to tell me that the dreaded time had come. Sitting in his lap, I raised the head bowed low in his hands, and looked in his eyes to read a confirmation of my worst fears.

"O, Charlie, Charlie!" The whole great agony went forth in that wild, despairing cry; and throwing both arms around his neck, I wept long and bitterly. The tea bell rang, but the hour went by unheeded. Later in the evening Jennie came in. Stepping quietly to my side, she clasped my hand in token of the sympathy she had no words to express, and would have left the room, but Charlie detained her.

"When?" she asked. It was the very word I had been trying to speak for more than an hour.

"To-morrow," was the reply.

"And Mr. Kingsley?"

"Will go with me. The school will be left in your charge the remainder of the present term, or longer, if you will." He told her all his plans; and last of all, that early in the morning they were going to move Aunt Mary and Aunt Martha from the uncomfortable apartments they occupied, to the warm, sunny rooms overhead.

"Come, sis," he added, cheerily, "you must wake up now to the wants of the case. I am going to con-

sign Mrs. Benson to your especial care. I left her, an hour or two ago, almost hopeless. You must visit her every day in my stead, and make a due report to me of all the unfavorable symptoms. You may make Aunt Mary as many neighborly calls as you choose. You will find that in being mindful of her you are entertaining an angel unawares."

"I'd rather have you than all the Aunt Marys in this world, or angels in the other! You need not go. You must not go."

"Don't, Fannie! It only makes my duty harder, without benefiting you in any way. It may be only for a little while. So cheer up, and see what I have brought you. You must wear it every day, and when you look at it, remember your brother left you only in obedience to a higher than any earthly call. You would not have me remiss in my duty;" and he slipped on my finger a little gold circlet, in the centre of which gleamed a white pearl set round with many smaller gems.

"There, sis, I've wished it on, and you mustn't remove it till I come and give you permission."

"Thank you, dear Charlie, but I shall remember you without looking at this; everything will remind me.

O, I can't bear it. I can't let you leave me;" and then I broke down again.

"I shall have to put you under guardianship; that is certain. What say, Jennie? Will you agree to perform the duties of that office, if you can, without too much inconvenience to yourself, spend the nights here with Fannie."

"Yes, I'll take care of her; never fear. I spend more than half of them with her now; and it will be no inconvenience at all to spend the others; there's nothing would suit me better."

"Do you hear that, Fan? Come, wake up, now, and pay your lodging, else you shall be sent immediately to bed, if I am to be governor. Do you hear?"

She still retained my hand, and turning the ring around my finger, examined it carefully.

"I must leave you a memento, Jennie;" and Charlie leaned backward, and took from his desk a jewel case. "See, Fannie, these were your great-grandmother's; and this has been worn by every generation since." He had selected a plain gold band, and fitted it on Jennie's finger while he was speaking. Her eyes were raised to his, for an instant, inquiringly.

"You understand all the import of this, Jennie: will you wear it there for my sake? I thought all the fore-

noon I would not leave till I could leave you here with my sister, — and the right to call her your sister, too. It was no hasty thought, but the germ of years. Perhaps 'tis better as it is. But say one word; that by and by, when I come back, you will come to bless our home with your presence, and me with your love, and I will be content. Answer me, Jennie: have I waited and hoped all these years in vain?"

"Don't, please don't; you will break my heart. I cannot, O, I cannot. I am bound by a solemn promise. Take all I have any right to give — the earnest of my friendship, which will know no change till death. Till my latest breath I shall never cease to think of and pray for you. Then in that other world, where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, we may love like the angels."

"And is this all, when I have hoped so much? I did not know, I never dreamed, of another coming between. Forgive all I have said, and let its memory cease to exist. May you be happy —"

"You do not understand me. There is no other between."

"Then why — what was it you said, if indeed you cannot give both your love and confidence —"

"It is not that. I trust you fully, and yet have no right to explain, only this: I am bound by a solemn promise, which I cannot, dare not break, however my own heart dictates. I wish I might tell you all. This burden I carry is crushing me to the earth. But I must bear it alone; it is my cross, and it cannot be changed."

"You say there is no other?"

"I do."

"That your promise, whatever its nature, does not bind you to another?"

"I am bound to no one."

"Then why — what is it that can stand between?"

"Nought but the promise of which I told you before. I cannot tell you more. I hardly know myself. Do not urge me farther. But O, do not doubt me; do not distrust me. Assure me of your confidence, at least."

"I do believe you. I will trust you always." He removed the ring from the finger where he first put it to another. "You can wear it there, Jennie. 'Tis but the emblem of friendship now. I have offered you a heart that can know no change. I make no withdrawal. If the time ever comes when you are free, do not hesitate

to speak. Promise that you will come to me. I shall never again urge you, in face of this vow you have made, the nature of which I cannot in the smallest degree fathom. But I shall wait for you always. The ring shall be emblematical of a mutual trust and a mutual friendship. When you return it, of your own accord, to the finger where I first placed it, I shall understand and meet you with outstretched arms."

"If ever the time comes when I may, as God bears me witness, I promise you I will."

## CHAPTER XXV.

"Saw nought in its despair  
But dreadful time — dreadful eternity;  
No comfort anywhere!"

"Be calm, my child; forget thy woe,  
And think of God and heaven:  
Christ, thy Redeemer, hath to thee  
Himself for comfort given.  
O, tell me, tell me what is heaven,  
And tell me what is hell.  
To be with Wilhelm — that's my heaven;  
Without him — that's my hell!"

DAYS, weeks, and months dragged wearily by, — Spring with her chaplet of flowers, and Winter with his ice-bound fetters, — a whole year was gone, and still the tide of war swept onward.

There was little at home to break the dull monotony — picking lint. It was my daily employment, sitting in Aunt Mary's room by the sunny south window, and every month sending to Charlie the fruit of my toils. Jennie often lent her aid in the work; all her spare moments were passed there. She and Aunt Mary

blended together like drops of dew. There was one tie between them with which I had nought to do — a spiritual feast in which my heart would not join.

Scarce a day went by that did not bring some news from the army, and over and over again the letters were read and commented upon, — Aunt Martha so far forgetting her own troubles as to admit there were others in the world, whose sufferings might exceed her own.

Charlie came to spend a few days with us at the end of the year, and some weeks later Mr. Kingsley obtained short leave of absence to surprise us with a visit.

So passed *another* twelve months, and then the "beginning of the end" was near.

For four long years Virginia had withstood the tide of invasion, while, like mighty waves, the loyal hosts surged with overwhelming front against her firm barriers, only to recoil, and turn back baffled, again to return with renewed strength.

Preparations were in active operation for a general movement against the rebel capital. Sheridan's cavalry had made a successful expedition north of the James River, cutting off the northern communication

of Richmond, making a junction with the army of the Potomac in front of Petersburg. The army of the West had accomplished the object assigned to it, under General Sherman, and in the depth of winter, in spite of the most formidable difficulties, forced its way from Georgia northward, through the Carolinas, and with the army of Grant, now confronted Lee at Richmond.

The battle at Five Forks was fought and won by Sheridan; the lines of Petersburg assaulted and carried; Richmond evacuated by the Confederate force, and entered by the national troops; and the stars and stripes raised on the capital of the Confederacy. The whole war force of the South was exhausted, and peace once more secure.

For three days no letter had come from Charlie. On the afternoon of the day following, at the hour for the close of school, I started out to meet Jennie, hoping that the day's mail would bring the wished-for missive.

It was no letter she brought, only the daily paper, with an additional list of the killed and wounded before Petersburg. She was reading the second column, — the names of the wounded and missing, — when I drew

her arm through mine, keeping pace with her slow step that I might read with her.

There was a quick gasp, and then she snatched the paper from my hand in a manner so abrupt, so unlike herself, that for a moment I stood still in utter amazement. She was deathly pale, and her hand trembled so violently that it was with difficulty she retained her hold of it.

"What is it, Jennie?" I inquired eagerly, every moment enhancing my fears. "Tell me. Let me see."

"No, no, Fan; we will go home first," she answered, trying to speak calmly, at the same time leaning heavily against me for support.

"I will know now!" and seizing the paper, which she had not strength to retain, I ran my eyes hastily down the remaining column.

"COLONEL JOSEPH REDFIELD, *wounded and missing.*"

And directly underneath, —

"SURGEON CHARLES WILBUR, *killed and missing.*"

The earth seemed receding under my feet; darkness closed around me, and I knew no more.

On the bed by Aunt Martha's side, with Jennie and

Aunt Mary bending over me, I woke to consciousness — to the full reality of my sudden bereavement. Killed in the very moment of victory, when I was counting the hours before I might hope to see him!

In the bitterness of my grief I cursed aloud the creature who had robbed me of my all, and in my heart the Creator who suffered him to do it.

How intolerable the hours that followed, every moment seemingly lengthened into years! The rising sun and golden light, streaming in at the window, were a mockery. "The evening and the morning were the first day." Thus I must live out my appointed time, groaning under this burden I could not carry, refusing to be comforted.

In that first dreadful night I lived over all the former years; and, staring at me wherever I turned my gaze, the words of young Mr. Fenn came back with a double weight of meaning, —

"Refuse not, lest he take your idol from you!"

Another night, and another day, each hour longer, more intolerable, than the one preceding it. In vain they tried to comfort me. Their words fell like lead. My heart was frozen within me, and bound around by an impregnable barrier no human power could pass.

"We must leave you in the hands of Charlie's

God!" It was on the evening of the third day that Aunt Mary pressed a kiss upon my cold, motionless lips, and whispered the words.

"Charlie's God!" Charlie would wait for me somewhere — somehow! The time would come, though far distant, when I might find him again — looking away down the dim vista of years!

"I will arise, and go to my Father."

Ah! there was little to detain me now! Like the weary dove, the ark was my only refuge. Claspings my great burden, I bore it to the foot of the cross. The icy barrier gave way, and with the dawn of another morning rose the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings; and where my treasure was, thither my heart went also.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

"And Freedom's flag is sacred;  
He who would work it harm,  
Let him, although a brother,  
Beware our strong right arm!"

THE army of the Potomac was nearing its goal. To see for years the shining spires and Confederate flags of Richmond; to reach forward, but never to touch; to graze the rebel battlements, but not surmount them, — such had been their lot. Now rapidly advancing, the whole Union line had closed in about the remnant of the rebel army, and the work begun at Five Forks was finished in triumphs at Appomattox Court House.

But they who stood there exultant at the crowning victory were not all the conquerors. Thousands upon thousands filled soldiers' graves, and other thousands, scarred and maimed, were lying in hospitals over all the land. No more they who stood there bodily to witness this closing scene in the great drama of war, tasted the triumph of the day, than the cloud of witnesses that compassed them about, invisible.

In the last struggle, in the battle by day and the flight by night, following hard after, and often within the line of both fires, side by side, went Millbrook's surgeons. To hear a call from the wounded was to obey, no matter whether from loyal or rebel sufferer.

In the rapid advance of the lines, while Charlie was in the act of relieving a fallen enemy, a Confederate soldier took deliberate aim, and fired upon him.

Dashing after him went Joe, and the hand-to-hand encounter that ensued made short work. A broken arm paid the penalty of Joe's revenge, and, rendered powerless to pursue for a time, he turned back, to seek out from the fallen around him the surgeon of his regiment.

Charlie lay motionless where he had fallen, still grasping the canteen; but a short examination sufficed to reveal the fact that life was not extinct.

With his remaining arm Joe tried to raise him to an erect position, but, finding the effort fruitless, started in search of help. In a thicket of evergreens, but a few rods distant, he stumbled upon what seemed to promise some prospect for the aid he sought.

"Arrah! be jabbers! sure, an it's no good 'twould be doin' yerself, or the cause, to murder a man that's been dead four hours. What is it ye wants now?"

"Get up!"

"Och, now! how d'ye s'pose I can be doin' that same, when I've siven bullets lodged inside of me, and my brains scattered all around here?"

"Hold your tongue, and obey orders, or I'll give you another that will scatter the whole seven. Get up, I say!"

"Sure, and I can't do that; if it's convanient for yer honor to pass along, and let a bleeding comrade die in pace, I'd be much obliged for that same."

"Dry up, you blubbering spalpeen; there's a doctor close by that's wounded, and I want you to help me move him, so stir yourself."

"And if he's wounded, and kilt, and dyin', intirely, isn't it more comfortable like he'd be to lave him there? O, now will ye murder me in cowl'd blood?" for Joe was making a pretence of rapid preparation to execute his threat. "Lord, I'll get up, if it's only the stump of Dagon that's left of me, if ye'll put that out of sight!"

"Be lively about it; if you are not on your feet and over there, where you see that tree standing apart from the others, in just two minutes, you are a dead man!"

Driven to the wall, Pat sprang to his feet.

"And it's ivery tree in old Virginny I'll stand under



in less time than it takes yer honor to tell it, when it's a dacent man like yerself axes me. What shall I do to the likes of him? Now, sure he's a born gintleman to the backbone. Where'll I take howld of him first?"

"Careful — be careful! We must carry him back a piece; there's a hospital-tent not far away. You shall name your own reward, when I see him safely deposited where he can be well taken care of."

"Lave me alone for that; it's Pat Mahoney as can carry him to the end of the world, and not harm a hair of his head;" and gathering up his burden with herculean strength, he started forward at a rapid rate, pausing not once till he reached the tent to which Joe led the way, hardly able to go a step forward himself, the pain in his arm rapidly growing worse, and greatly aggravated by the task imposed upon him.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

"Parted friends may meet again  
When the storms of life are past,  
And the spirit, freed from pain,  
Find a friendship that will last.

"Christian friends again shall meet,  
From all earthly trials free.  
Crowned with mercy, O, how sweet  
Will eternal friendship be!"

# LOVING Aunt Mary!

As to her it was given to uphold for me the burden, and point the way to the foot of the cross, so to her it was given to take away from my lips the cup ere yet I had tasted half its bitterness.

With the simple, unwavering confidence with which from infancy I had regarded Charlie, I now went to Charlie's God, believing all things, hoping all things.

A week went by, but everything went on in the old, accustomed way. Nothing was removed from its place; indeed, I would not consent to have anything otherwise than as he left it. The books — his books — all re-

mained where he placed them; and before his desk the dear old chair — his chair — now seldom vacant, for there I went, and in its sheltering arms, looking back upon the life that had crowned mine with blessings, and forward to that other life in which now all my hopes were centred, found peace.

There I heard from Aunt Mary's lips the whole sad story of her early disappointment and loss.

A quarter of a century had lessened not the early love, or rendered less sacred her vows of fidelity to him and his. Not less dear was the little braided ring made of hair, one shade dark, the other a light, golden brown, and tied with a faded ribbon, on which was traced, in fine pencil-marks, "Till death do us part;" or the withered lily, hoarded with other mementoes of Sailor Ben.

We were sitting there at twilight, Jennie and I, talking of the loved and lost, and enjoying that spiritual communion which was another link to draw us yet closer together, when Aunt Mary opened the door, and, half laughing, half crying, in the excitement of a wild, o'ermastering joy, laid before us the evening paper, and pointed out this single paragraph: —

"We were pleased to learn, by special despatch, to-

day, that the report of the death of Dr. Chas. Wilbur, surgeon in the —th Massachusetts regiment, was untrue. He is now lying in one of the United States hospitals near Washington, convalescent. Colonel Redfield, to whom he is indebted for safe removal from the field where he fell, and who was reported missing, is at the same place, slowly recovering from a broken arm, and other wounds received in the affray before Petersburg."

What need to speak of the joy no words could express? Charlie living! It was as if one had been restored from the grave. With a hand resting upon the head of each, Aunt Mary poured out in words the thanksgiving with which our hearts overflowed. As in our affliction she could weep with those who wept, so in her heart she could now rejoice with those who did rejoice.

In presence of this new joy, I could not but remember that her cup still remained, though drained to the very dregs. A moment I hesitated before asking the question, —

"Who knows, Auntie, but your sailor may come back, too, some time? You never had any certain knowledge that he was dead."

"No; it was that very uncertainty that made, and still makes, the cross so heavy. If I could know the truth!"

"All things are possible to those who believe. I shall not cease to ask Charlie's God till we have some assurance."

"Amen!" whispered Jennie, kissing the hand that rested on her shoulder. "'If two shall agree as touching one thing, it shall be given.'"

With the same magic swiftness in which it gathered, so, when peace was established, melted away the army, silently as melts the snow in the April sunshine.

Ere many weeks came Charlie, not less dear because he held a second place; for the love of the Father, far outreaching all, hallowed this second love, made more sacred by its influence. Dear brother Charlie! I did not, could not, love him less, only God more.

When every other subject was exhausted, then he told me of the message with which Joe commissioned him — the brave colonel, whom he left in the hospital, not yet so far recovered as to render his removal North practicable.

"And now," concluded Charlie, after going over the whole ground, "what answer? I suppose he is waiting very impatiently to know. What do you say?"

"I shall never leave you."

"Never, Fan? What a sister! You would not leave me at present, even if you regarded his proposal favorably. He has yet to complete his studies; and five years as a soldier have not added much to his scholarly attainments, though they have by no means been lost to him. Out with it all. What new thought strikes you now?"

"My lasting indebtedness to him for saving you to me, when otherwise you might never have returned."

"Joe asks no affection that is born of gratitude. He bade me assure you of that. Unless you can give him the true, unbiassed love of your whole heart, he asks only a continuation of the old friendly regard which has ever existed between you."

"I know of no love which can exceed that I bear my brother, save my love for the Eternal; but tell him kindly, and assure him of my lasting gratitude for what has been. I could never be quite happy with any one who did not share with me in a future hope."

In the early days of summer I stood up with brother Charlie, and took upon myself the vows of God's house. What need to wait longer, or what wait for?

Walking home that quiet Sabbath afternoon, Charlie

took my hand, and turning the ring — his gift before he went away — around my finger, called my attention to the arrangement of the gems set round the centre stone, and asked if I knew the signification.

For the first time I read the meaning, — "Purified through suffering."

"You remember, when I wished it on, I told you not to remove it till I gave you permission. My wish is fulfilled — the fondest, dearest wish of my heart. God be praised, my sister, that wherever we go, whatever work we may be called to perform, we have this blessed assurance that we shall meet again, — 'Christians never meet for the last time.'"

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Home again! home again  
From a foreign shore!  
And O, it fills my soul with joy  
To meet my friends once more."

MR. KINGSLEY remained at the hospital with Joe. I knew that he had long shared his confidence, and was not surprised that the contents of the letter, written by me in my dictation, should be duly reported to him. He was both surprised and angry, that he was authorized to interfere with what I plainly considered the concern of his.

I did not know afterwards the mysterious workings of his heart.

He claimed more than a brother's right, to scold me as he thought fit; but there was one sentence which he valued more than any other, and held it as a treasure. The remainder was lost and forgotten.

Charlie answered verbatim, repeat-

ing my declaration, that "I could never be happy with any one who did not share with me in a future hope."

Mr. Kingsley touched but briefly on that point, but the words, though few, were a two-edged sword to my conscience.

"Let the '*elect*,' who look down from their high pedestal upon those who walk in darkness, *without* the fold, remember how many, if any, they have caused to stumble, who otherwise might be partakers in the same blessed hope!"

It was bitterly sarcastic. I could fancy the very expression into which his features were knit while he penned the lines. He was walking in darkness, and I had stood in the way! Not till afterwards, when I came to know how different from a brother's the place he held in my heart, did I suffer the full measure of grief for my sin.

Joe made only a flying visit to Millbrook, then went back to his studies. Mr. Kingsley left the hospital at the same time, and as before, whenever he had means at command to meet the necessary expense, travelled from place to place, still hoping that in some unlooked-for moment he might strike upon a clew that would lead to the discovery of his sister.

It was midwinter, and we had seen nothing of him;

only an occasional letter to Charlie informed us of his movements, and those were brief and hurriedly written.

The 15th of January was at hand — the anniversary of the evening on which we stood beneath the cedars, and mutually pledged to meet each other there again ten years later.

At an early hour Jennie and I started for the lake, first gaining a promise from Charlie that he would follow soon. Never was there fairer sky or smoother ice.

A merry crowd was already assembled when we reached the place; but among all the letters traced by the skaters, we sought in vain to find the initials of Mr. Kingsley. The bright fire, kindled early in the evening, midway between the bridge and island, was burning low, when a race was proposed; and gathering in a half-circle about it, we waited to hear the signal for starting.

"To what point?" was asked.

"Round the Cedars, and back to the bridge!" shouted one.

"Not half far enough!" replied a second.

"Down to the mill and back!" echoed a third.

"Down to Cedarville to meet the eight o'clock express train; it is due there in just twenty minutes."

"To Cedarville — one, two — forward."

Away we went, faster and faster! It seemed as if the ice was flying back under our feet. At the end of our race we waited some minutes to hear the shrill whistle of the locomotive; and when the long train came thundering through the village, and halted at the station, but a few rods distant, we were impatiently waiting the return signal from our leader.

Charlie had been detained at home longer than we hoped, and when we started for the village, had not made his appearance on the ice, which added not a little to our impatience.

Jennie and I were some distance in advance of the others, when we noticed one of the skaters, a little apart from the main party, start forward at a rapid rate, in a direct line towards the Cedars. In the deep shadows of the trees that skirted the shore we could only distinguish the outline; but simultaneously with his sudden movement, we doubled our speed in the endeavor to reach the spot before him. It was an equal warfare. At the same time we came around the island on one side he made his appearance on the other, and whirling suddenly about, cut the initials of his name directly beneath ours, then, with a masterly stroke, enclosed them all in a circle, and halting before us, extended a hand to each before we could recover from our surprise.

"Better late than never! I hardly expected to find such an escort when I stepped from the train at Cedarville. How are you both, and where is Charlie? I did not recognize him among the number."

"So you remembered the date. We were not expecting to see you here."

"Not expecting me? The promises I make are too few to be treated lightly. I never break an engagement. You two were the first I recognized when I stepped upon the ice. I kept in the shadows purposely, intending to reach this spot before you. Let us see if the old tree is true to memory also. We shall find the present date cut in the bark, if that has changed as little as the other surroundings."

"Yes, here it is!" replied Jennie. "I can hardly realize that half ten years have gone by since you cut those letters."

"Or since we came in such fine style to Aunt Mary's, and waited outside for brother Charlie."

"Or your sudden escapade," retorted Mr. Kingsley, with a merry laugh. "I had half a mind to interfere, at that time, in your behalf, but you seemed fully competent to fight it out on that line."

"So you listened — did you? Strange how some people always manage to be where they are most needed!"

He laughed again, which annoyed and angered me still more.

"Beg pardon, Fan; don't let us have a repetition of the same scene. I feel hardly competent to sustain my part in the drama, having fasted since eight o'clock this morning. I was obliged to ride all day to get here this evening. Let us go around on the other side, and see if the party are coming; they seem in no haste to get back. That old house bears the marks of half a score. Where's Aunt Mary?"

"With us. She is a permanent fixture there, and the old lady, too. Charlie has offered them a home as long as they choose to remain. We could hardly spare Aunt Mary now, after having her under our roof so long."

"And Aunt Martha, too. I can imagine you as kindly affectioned towards each other as two thistles."

"Mr. Kingsley, I know I fall very far short of the mark for which I strive, that I waver often and often; but my daily prayer is for grace and patience." His words wounded this time, for I remembered how very easily I had yielded to my besetting sin, and for the merest trifle.

He took my hand a moment, then put it down again gently. I understood better than if he had used words to express his sorrow for having tempted me to anger.

"Call me Will, please, as you used, else I shall feel a stranger in all the home I know."

"There is a home attainable to all, where none can feel strangers. May we both find a place there, brother Will."

Jennie had skated around to the opposite side of the island from the place where we first met, and now called us to interpret what she had found.

"It is a date five years later than the present time cut in this tree, and underneath are several letters, one below the other. What do you make of it?"

"J. N. and R., with part of another letter, which looks, as far as it goes, like the one above it. It seems, at first sight, as if the engraver changed his or her mind, and leaving the letter incomplete, branched off without any definite plan. Can you solve it, Fan?"

"No; I know of no person whose name corresponds with those initials."

"They seem to be arranged, these letters, as if to designate three individuals, instead of one," said Mr. Kingsley, after making a more careful examination than at first; "and that last, if you look at it closely, you will find it takes a more definite form. Look again."

"O, I see!" exclaimed Jennie; "that is a stalk of

rye, springing out from the unfinished letter, with the top waving over the others. The letter partly made must be an R also. Did you trace out the same resemblance?"

"Yes; it must have been done a long time, judging from the looks. Perhaps we shall find something more. This little place seems a museum of curiosity. We might as well make the entire circuit. You didn't tell me whether the doctor came with you."

"The doctor can speak for himself." Charlie came in time to answer the question. "Really this is a most happy surprise! I should have come earlier, but was called away; and when I got back, I found a stranger there, whom I hardly felt justified in leaving even long enough to fulfil my promise to come and see these girls safely home. I've redeemed my reputation, and if you've skated enough for one evening, and made as many pothooks and trammels on the ice as you wish, we will set our faces homeward. I left Aunt Mary preparing tea for our visitor, and must get back in time to do the honors devolving upon the host."

"I have considered myself on the borders of starvation the last three hours," replied Mr. Kingsley; "and if a hungrier than I has arrived at your board, I shall need no further urging than the necessity of looking to my own interests. Come, Fan, we will lead off."

Our noisy gayety, when we reached the house, could not exceed the no less demonstrative joy within.

In the dining-room we found Aunt Mary doing all the honors at the table, and the dark face of the stranger opposite, tanned and sunburnt by thirty years' exposure upon the ocean, in every wind and clime. Ah! we had no need to ask who was the stranger, for at first glance we knew it was no other than "Sailor Ben." The two were not alone. Poor old Aunt Martha, after the first look at her boy, would not consent to have him out of sight for an instant; and so he had taken her, like a baby, in his arms, brought her down stairs, and placed her in Charlie's chair, which Aunt Mary had wheeled out of the office and arranged for her opposite him.

Not till a late hour could they coax her to go back to her room; and when, overcome by excitement and weariness, she fell asleep, Aunt Mary stole softly back to the side of Ben.

The clock was tolling the hour of midnight when Charlie drew forth from his desk the package intrusted to him years before by Captain Grey, and unfolding the papers, read aloud

"UNCLE JACK'S CONFESSION."



## CHAPTER XXIX.

"Jennie kissed me when we met,  
 Jumping from the chair she sat in.  
 Time, you thief, who love to get  
 Sweets into your list; put that in.  
 Say I'm weary, say I'm sad,  
 Say that health and wealth have missed me,  
 Say, I'm growing old, but add,  
 Jennie kissed me!"

"SOMETHING tells me that what I do must be done quickly. I hear it whispered continually. Whether or not this which I am about to write will ever be seen or read by mortal man, God only knows. The age of miracles is not past; stranger things have happened; and if Ben Howard still lives, and should make this port, I could not rest in my grave if this secret, which haunts me, were buried with me. God knows I meant him no harm; but we loved the same woman; he with the frank, boyish confidence which fears no denial, sees no shadows, and I with the fierce, passionate love which is the fountain of jealousy and the parent of despair.

"Could I stand idly by and see him win the prize for which I would willingly have bartered my soul? I believe he never knew that I cherished for her more than a friendly regard. He made me his confidant in everything, and through all looked to me as his most trustworthy friend.

"The secret hope of years became a firm resolve, when the Sea-foam, of which I was master, left port, bound for England, with Ben as first mate. It was to be his last voyage, and everything was arranged for the wedding to take place immediately after his return.

"The house was made ready for occupancy, — *his house*, — for I solemnly swear that the cottage now occupied by James Brown was bought and paid for by Ben, the money for the same counted out, and paid over to Joshua Ring in my presence, and the deed written and signed by him and his wife, which deed Ben gave me to read, and left in the hands of the squire, with other papers, when he sailed. To save this property for those to whom it justly belonged, I became the purchaser, consenting to make of myself a cloak for his iniquity, not for the greed of gain, but as the price of my own sin.

"I need not repeat the series of falsehoods, the deceit and hypocrisy, which I brought to my aid. Suffice it

to say, I gained my point, and within one month from the time we entered the harbor, which was our destination, had the pleasure of seeing Ben sail therefrom as master of an East India merchantman, bound for a three years' cruise. The letters intrusted to me for his Mary were secretly opened and destroyed.

"Elated with the success of my move in the game, I visited her immediately after my return, and proceeded, though with great caution, to make the second. I had no fears that any letters Ben might mail would find their way beyond the post-office box while Squire Ring held the keys, and so long as she received no tidings from him, any letters mailed by her would stand but small chance of reaching him.

"Within five years, in a foreign port, I had the satisfaction of seeing him married to a widow with two children, after an acquaintance of less than six weeks, this being another result of my artful duplicity. He married her with the firm belief that she whom he first loved, and who, I believe, was even then no less dear than ever, was false.

"This lady, the widow of a sea captain, had known no other home since her childhood than the vessel on board which he became acquainted with her, it having been commanded, successively, by her father, her hus-

band, and his brother, who, at this second marriage, refused to part with the nephew who bore his name, and was a very picture of himself in form and feature.

"The parting scene between this brother and his little sister was the occasion of the first remorse I experienced for the part I had undertaken. It was too late then to undo what was accomplished; but God forbid that I shall ever feel such a measure of despair as in that moment, when I rushed from the cabin, and leaping over the gunwale, swam ashore, to escape the cries of those children, which ring in my ears to this day.

"We remained at anchor, side by side, through the season following, and in early fall, when I left that port, sailing direct for Boston, his wife and her child sailed with me, it being deemed advisable for her to seek a home there, and wait till Ben's arrival, as he was intending to make several stops on the way, which would necessarily detain him through the winter.

"Our voyage was a long and stormy one—a continued series of disasters. Three days' sail from land, Mrs. Howard gave birth to a babe, and on the evening of the day following we consigned her lifeless form to the watery deep. The child lived in spite of my desires to the contrary, for what to do with these two specimens of humanity, left upon my hands, was a

problem I tried in vain to solve. More than once I took them in my arms with the intention of throwing them overboard, but my courage failed. We landed at midnight, and taking the little girl from her couch, without disturbing her slumbers, I carried her on shore, and deposited her at some distance from the wharf, in a place where she would not fail of being early discovered.

"My only sister was at that time living in the city, and thither I bent my steps. I found her in the wild abandonment of her first great sorrow, weeping over the inanimate form of her first born, who opened his eyes but once on earth, then closed them again forever. She was alone, her husband being absent on business in another state. Instantly my resolve was taken. Two hours later her arms enfolded another tiny form, and warm lips nestled at the fountain of life and love. For me she carried this terrible secret, till the burden crushed her to the earth. The burden is mine alone henceforward, for how shall he, her husband, know of the little one who came and went in his absence, to make a place for this his foster child.

"O, Jennie, Jennie! has the thought never come to you, that she whom you first called mother was not she who gave you birth, and that upon him whom you know only as father you have no claim?"

Charlie paused to recover from the emotion he could not control, and with a cry of joy, Mr. Kingsley sprang to Jennie's side, and clasped her in his arms.

"My sister! my sister! speak to me. The mother who bore you was my mother also." He folded her in one long embrace, then led her across the room, and clasping the sailor's hands, exclaimed, —

"Sailor Ben, I may call you father henceforward; she is my half-sister and your child!"

Sitting between these two, neither of whom would let her go, by and by she motioned to Charlie, who continued: —

"I saw Ben but once afterwards. The letter I mailed to him after my arrival in Boston reached him in time to prevent his sailing to America. It informed him of the decease of his wife at sea, and that his step-daughter was well provided for. Of the babe, his child, he knew nothing, and to this day, if living, he is ignorant that such a one exists.

"Years after I met him on the coast of Australia. We spent a day together. How little he dreamed, when he clasped my hand at parting, that all of bitterness which had been his in life was dealt out to him by his professed friend! A score of times he has recalled the day when, at the risk of my life, I leaped

overboard, and saved him from drowning, sounding my praises till it seemed as if a mountain weight rested on my guilty soul. Yes, I saved him, not for his sake, but to save myself from the brand of a murderer; for my hand stranded the rope which broke with his weight when he fell into the sea.

"Such is the record of my life. I have staked everything, my peace of mind, even my soul, to gain the love of one who is as far above and beyond me as the heavens from the earth — and lost. With his child before me, a daily reminder of my sin, how can I ever hope to find peace? Once I thought the worst was over; I fancied I was forgetting; and then *he* came — *her son!* Another thought haunts me — the possibility that, some time in the future, unconscious of the tie of blood, they may — this brother and sister — come to love each other. I try to banish this foolish whim, born of a guilty conscience; but it haunts me still. If I could see her the wife of another, so that this might not be, how the load would be lifted! If death were an endless sleep, how welcome!"

Charlie folded the paper in silence, and laid it back in his desk.

To Jennie these last words were a key to that mystery which she had tried in vain to explain even to

herself. It was a release from the vow that bound her.

In his last moments, Uncle Jack, burdened with this terrible thought, had, in a moment of sanity, begged her to promise him that she would in no case consent to a union with any one.

"Tell me why, Uncle Jack. I have never thought of marriage but in the abstract. I am contented with the life in which God has placed me; but I would not willingly bind myself to such a promise without some reason."

"I cannot tell you why. Only promise — promise! quick! while I can hear you. My brain is in a whirl —"

"Dear uncle, try to calm yourself. There can be no occasion for this excitement."

"Will you promise, child? Give me one moment of peace, which is all I have any hope for, either here or hereafter; only say yes, and if ever the time comes when this I cannot explain is revealed to you, you are free from the obligation. You will understand it, and why I urge you, and what I fear for you, if ever the time does come."

"I promise, Uncle Jack."

She did understand. Like a flash it dawned upon her when the last sentence was read. The great gulf

which had for years separated her from the only one whom she could ever love, might be safely bridged over. Hers was the task.

An instant she toyed with the ring, that still held its place, the emblem of a mutual confidence. Her womanly pride assured her she could trust him still.

The folded manuscript was replaced in the desk, and Charlie turned about to resume his seat. At the same instant Jennie rose from hers. Casting upon him a look of unutterable love and confidence, she slipped the ring back to its old place, and reaching out her hands, took a step forward. More than half way he met her, and, folding her to his great manly heart, whispered, —

"Mine always, Jennie. Thank God that I have lived to see this blessed hour."

A few whispered words were exchanged between them, then Charlie led her to her father.

"Captain Howard, am I selfish to ask you to give her to me so soon? I wait but for your consent and blessing; her heart, I know, has long been mine."

Without a word Sailor Ben rose to his feet, and placing Jennie's hand in that of brother Charlie, kissed his child for the first time.

Her father's first kiss! To her it was a silent benediction.

## CHAPTER XXX.

"Fair young Hannah  
Ben, the sunburnt sailor, gayly woos.  
Tall and clever,  
For a willing heart and hand he sues.  
And the skies are all aglow,  
And the waves are laughing so!  
For her wedding  
Hannah leaves her window and her shoes."

"Of all sad words of tongue or pen,  
The saddest are these: 'It might have been.'"

"Ah, well! for us all some sweet hope lies  
Deeply hidden from human eyes!  
And in the Hereafter angels may  
Roll the stone from its grave away."

**A** YEAR and more has passed away since the arrival of Sailor Ben to his native village.

In the cottage we find him with Aunt Mary and the aged grandmother, who, since her boy has come back, seems to have taken a new lease of life.

Mrs. Brown has obtained her long-cherished wish,

and the family have moved to a home of their own, in the immediate vicinity of her father at Cedarville — a home purchased by Sailor Ben, and given them by him in consideration of services rendered to his child. Between them all the most kindly feeling exists. The ties of childhood, growing with her growth, can never be severed by Jennie, because of the knowledge that the tie of blood is wanting; and though another claims and receives from her a daughter's love, she will never know him otherwise than father whom she has called by that name ever since her infant lips first learned to frame the word.

Dear sister Jennie! None the dearer — for that can never be — because Charlie has given me the right to call her by that title.

When at the twilight hour he turns his face homeward, he finds two waiting his coming in the old arm-chair; for Jennie claims an equal right with me in this long-established custom of the household. Why not? And yet that hour brings with it sad memories at times. Her heart will cry out for the sister never seen, whom she knows only by name, and for the brother, who, with the few additional links which "Uncle Jack's confession" added to the scanty knowledge concerning her, turned directly away from Millbrook.

What need to follow him in the fruitless search through long months and years?

"Will he never be satisfied?" The oft-repeated question became household words.

For the twentieth time Jennie asked me, when we sat one evening in the office, watching the glowing coals in the open grate, —

"Do you think he will ever come home, Fannie? It seems like distrusting Providence to continue the search in this manner. 'Can we not leave her in the hands of God?' I asked him in my last letter; and hear his answer: 'If you can leave her thus, thank your God for giving you such confidence; I have no God to leave her with.' O, Fan, must this always be so? God only knows how dear he has become to me; and may not the prayers of two which agree be answered in his salvation? It may be selfish in me; but O, I miss him so much, and long to see him back!"

And long to see him back! The words found a responsive echo. Not till that moment, when I stood face to face with my own heart, did I learn whose was the hand that had power to sweep at will my heart-strings, and waken melody at its slightest touch.

Without daring even to speak, I kissed her cheek, then hastily retreated to my chamber. For what? To

meet the self-reproach, the remorse of a newly awakened conscience, to crouch down in utter confusion and shame before this knowledge, that all unconsciously my heart had flowed out towards another, unasked and unsought! Well might I watch and pray through the long, long night, finding another idol on the shrine where my heart was fain to worship. Dearer now than life was the soul of this one, in whose path I had been a stumbling-block when he would have led me with him to the kingdom.

No shadowy circle about the eyes, no languid motion, betrayed my vigilant watch next morning when we gathered at the breakfast table. The heart that knew its own bitterness none but God saw. To him I went with this new burden, believing; and though until the eleventh hour the answer might tarry, my faith could not waver.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

"There shall be light at eventide."

"But there is a stream with a grander flow,  
And a dearer, sweeter song;  
And lovers shall cross to a different school,  
And help each other along!"

COME with me once more to brother Charlie's office, and see what changes time has wrought. It is the 15th of January, and the day makes me thirty.

Do you know whose is that child, half buried among the books her mischievous fingers have spent an hour in piling around her?

Roguish little Fan, a very edition, they say, of the auntie whose name she bears; but the hand that guides her will deal not less tenderly, or less firmly, than in the years gone by; for the love that Charlie bears his first born cannot be less than the love which watched over and guarded from infancy his mother's child.

A step is in the entry, a hand upon the door, and

pushing with all her little strength against the breast-work that encircles her, the structure yields to her touch, and through the path thus made she rushes in eager haste to meet her father, who pauses in silence to regard this new freak of mischief.

Nothing daunted, she reaches both hands upward, and a childish voice says, —

"Don't scold, doctor. Auntie says my nose is broken in two places; and I've looked all your me'cine books way through, and they ain't nothin' in the whole of 'em to mend it. Now, papa, please carry me up stairs to see the babies."

"Not yet; see what a lot of work must be done first," pointing to the books, scattered about the floor.

"Auntie can fix 'em!"

"Auntie didn't put them there!" and sitting down quietly in his chair, he waits while she picks them up, one by one, and returns them to the places from which she removed them.

"Now, doctor, Fan is ready. Did God give the babies to mamma?"

"Yes, darling!"

"Will he care if I give auntie one? for mamma can't take care of two; and you have got me, you know."

"We will see what mamma says about that."

Sitting by Jennie's side, with his little girl in his lap, Charlie read the letter which the evening mail brought from Mr. Kingsley.

MY DEAR SISTER: I am coming home. When this letter reaches you, I shall be in New York. The steamer in which I am to take passage leaves Liverpool to-morrow. In a few weeks, at the longest, I shall be in Millbrook, with the dear friends from whom I have been parted so long.

The toils of all these years have been in vain, in that nothing has led to the discovery of her for whom the sacrifice has been made. No, not all vain, for I have found *The Friend*, and, like you, am now content to leave her in his hands. If not here, in the Great Hereafter, we may hope to meet an unbroken family.

I do not give up the hope of some time finding her in this world; but I can wait God's time and way. I shall make my home with you, and share with Charlie in the labors incident to his extensive practice.

A folded paper, enclosed in the same envelope, fell to the floor while he was reading, bearing my name.

Sitting in my room, I have read and re-read its con-



tents. My prayers have not been in vain. As it was once mine to stand in the way, now it has been given me to be the instrument in God's hand for his conversion. Yes, he is coming home; in a few hours, at longest, he will be with us. I may not repeat all his words, traced upon the closely-filled sheet; only this single paragraph, pencilled upon the margin at the post-office, the last moment before it left his hand.

"I leave here to-morrow morning, hoping to catch the night express, which is due at Cedarville at eight o'clock. If the lake is frozen, I shall take the old route. Meet me at the Cedars, and learn from your old teacher one more lesson. Au revoir."

The shadows of night have fallen; the shrill whistle of the coming train sounds afar; and throwing aside my pen, I hasten to the lake to repeat the lesson he has asked me to come and learn, and bid him welcome home again my Teacher, my Torment, my Theodore.