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THE RIVALS:

1864

MU

A CHICKAHOMINY STORY.

From. Lorn's

By Miss M. J. H., ^{auth}

OF VIRGINIA.

ILLUSTRATED.



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THE RIVALS.

CHAPTER I.

Near the close of a bright June afternoon, two boys were slowly sauntering along a narrow, grass-grown road conducting through a dense oak wood to and from the old Washington Henry Academy, a very venerable, if not a very renowned seat of learning, in the county of Hanover, Virginia. The arm of each was thrown over the neck of the other, in the familiar and affectionate manner so common to boys who are very particular friends; and between them they held an open letter, a passage in which one was pointing out to the other. The one to whom the letter evidently belonged, was a remarkably handsome youth, with a delicate, graceful figure, regular and aristocratic features, a pale olive complexion, and jetty hair and eyes. But although in the formation of his face nature had strictly adhered to the laws of beauty, yet from within, the soul, in its out-beaming, had imprinted upon this otherwise fair index, some things less agreeable than the perfect lines and curves of the beautifully chiseled features. There was about the large, dark eye, and the high, pale brow, an expression of reserve and caution almost sinister; the poise of the small classic head, and the curve of the thin, pale nostril, betokened a *hauteur* almost offensive in its excess, and the line of the thin, red lips, though graceful and artistic, bespoke a mingled cynicism and egotism rather unpleasant than otherwise to contemplate. Still, the shadowy, mystical pencillings of the soul upon the countenance were as yet but faint—the youth was but seventeen—not strong enough to mar greatly the general harmony of color and proportion indelibly stamped there; and the general, yea, the universal verdict was that Walter Maynard was a very handsome youth.

The artist, upon coolly inspecting the more athletic, but less perfectly symmetrical figure, and the less regular, though more manly features of his friend and companion, Charley Foster, would have pronounced them less beautiful than those we have described; this would, perhaps, also be the verdict of the superficial observer who might not be an artist; but the physiognomist, who looked beyond the inferior material, qualities of form and color, to the mental graces, or deformities which are capable of shedding such a magically beautiful light, or such a repulsive cloud over the 'human face divine,' would have pronounced differently. The pure light of intellect which illuminated the faces of both was about equal in degree, and nearly so in kind; but those mental qualities which go to form the moral nature of man, had been distributed between them by Providence with a view to producing variety rather than unity. The broad brow, and clear, dark gray eye of Charley Foster shone and beamed with candor and sincerity; about his rather large, though well-shapen mouth, there was an expression of mingled firmness and tenderness quite captivating to behold; in his free, easy carriage there was just enough of dignified self-respect to inspire respect in others; and his frank, cordial manners courted the friendship and confidence which the gravity and reticence of Walter seemed to repel. By their school-mates, the one was admired; the other, both admired and beloved.

When they had proceeded a short distance, they paused under a huge oak tree, which stood immediately on the roadside, and Charley threw himself on the grass at its foot, and resting the elbow which supported his head on its mossy root, exclaimed—

'And so, Walter, you are going to be a soldier?'

'Yes,' replied Walter, seating himself beside him, 'so it seems; my aunt Emeline writes, you see, that my great uncle, Horace Maynard, who has charitably undertaken my education, that I might not disgrace the family by my ignorance, has procured me an appointment to the West Point Military Academy.'

'Well,' pursued Charley, without noticing the slightly ironical tone in which a part of his friend's reply was delivered, 'I should not have thought of your being a soldier. You are brave and ambitious enough, to be sure, but I do not think you have the reckless daring and love of adventure one naturally associates with the members of the military profession. In my mind, I had decided upon the law for both of us, and I think, Walter, that you have some qualities which peculiarly fit you for the legal calling; I thought, too, that the law was your choice.'

'Beggars should not and certainly cannot be choosers,' replied Walter, bitterly. 'You forget, Charley, that I am an orphan, and poor; that my father and grandfather spent their lives in squandering the princely estate their ancestors had accumulated, leaving me an old name and an empty purse; that I am dependent upon my aunts, who have reared me, and upon my great-uncle, who, purely from family pride, has charged himself with my education, and am compelled to submit to their direction. This military scheme has enabled uncle Horace, with his usual address, "to kill two birds with one stone." I will go to the academy as a kind of pensioner, to be snubbed and jeered at by the wealthy cadets, and therefore my expenses will be to him inconsiderable, while I will be obtaining a good education and an honorable profession; and if I contrive to get through with credit, I will doubtless get a lieutenancy in the army, which will pay about as well as a third-rate clerkship in some mercantile establishment and keep me cooped up in a marine fortress, or banished to the wild frontier during the whole of my natural life, like some unfortunate state prisoner or political exile.'

'You paint a gloomy picture of it,' said Charley. 'If you object to the scheme, Walter, oppose it at once. If you are young, you have a right to be heard in a matter of such importance to yourself. If you prefer some other calling, my father will, I know, lend you any amount of money necessary to pursue it for my sake.'

'Oh, no,' replied Walter, quickly; 'I could not think of such a thing. It is too humiliating to be in debt. I find it bitter enough to be under obligations to those from whom I have a right to expect favors, ever to consent to accept them from those upon whom I have no claim. Besides, the plan you propose is rather too uncertain. It would take a large sum to enable me to graduate in law or medicine, and then I might not succeed. Or if I should ultimately succeed, either profession would not be immediately self-supporting, while that which uncle Horace has chosen for me will be. And if the military profession is not lucrative, it is certainly very honorable, and in my case very sure. You know the army is almost universally chosen for the younger son of the British nobility, and is patronized by the first families in Virginia.'

'Very true,' was the response, 'I dare say that with your pride, the glory will quite outweigh the hardships of a soldier's life. You know that all the big men of history were soldiers. Who knows, Walter, but that you may be another Caesar, or Napoleon, leading powerful armies, and dazzling the world with your skillfully planned campaigns and brilliant victories.'

'Nonsense!' said Walter, laughing. 'Promotion is rather slow in our army; and even if I possessed the talents of a Caesar, or a Napoleon, I would scarcely have an opportunity to display them. Don't you know that Mr. Reed told us, only this afternoon in our history class, that so far as human foresight could penetrate, America seemed doomed to years, perhaps centuries, of unbroken peace; that the Monroe doctrine, which had become the established policy of our government, would secure us forever against en-

tanglements with foreign nations, while the extent, the wealth and power of our country would enable us to control our feeble neighbors on this continent.'

'Yes,' observed Charley; 'but have you forgotten what we were pleased to term the idiosyncrasy of Mr. Reed's French friend, Monsieur Bossieux, who visited him last year? He declared, you know, that the American people were treading on a volcano; that the vast extent of our territory, and the wide diversity of opinion and interest between the people of its different sections, would inevitably lead to disruption and revolution; and he boldly predicted that the sectional animosities, so apparent to a foreigner, would show their bitter fruits in intestine war before the present generation should be gathered to their fathers.'

'Pshaw!' exclaimed young Maynard contemptuously, 'what does a Frenchman know about American politics? However, we can pardon his error if his opinion of government is founded on French history, and his views of human nature are derived from the contemplation of the French character. But we Americans are made of firmer material. It would be ridiculous to compare the glorious republic established by our worthy revolutionary forefathers to the monstrous abortion brought forth amid the fearful throes of the horrible and fruitless revolution of France, and it is no less ridiculous to compare their sons, who are charged with the maintenance and honor of our government, to the ignorant and frenzied rabble who attempted the same experiment in M. Bossieux's country, and failed. He saw with a Frenchman's eye, and judged with a Frenchman's judgment—superficially. The Presidential election was going on, and he was misled by the violence of party excitement; the election is now over, and see how profoundly quiet the country is.'

'Yes,' said Charley, 'and very probably if he is in America now he has already changed his mind. What is that beautiful figure, Walter, of the famous Druid's stone which is so perfectly poised that it may be rocked to its very centre by the touch of an infant's finger, yet the combined strength of an army of strong men cannot overthrow its equilibrium—how appropriate it is to our government!'

Thus discoursed these sage philosophers and profound politicians of seventeen; and when they had done discussing the affairs of the nation, they returned again to their own, and took up the subject of Walter's future prospects in his newly chosen profession. Naturally enough, their favorite heroes among the military characters of history were brought up, their campaigns and battles gone over, and their relative merits discussed until the two youths grew quite enthusiastic in praise of a military career. Charley declared that the martial spirit was fully aroused in him, and that he felt quite as belligerent as old Dick Jones, who said that after going to Pole Green to muster and drinking a quart or so of mean whiskey, he was fighting the battle of Yorktown over for four days. In the ardor of the moment he determined to accompany his friend to West Point, if his father would give his consent to it, and be a soldier too.

Just at this juncture, their attention was attracted by the tramping of hoofs behind them, and looking in that direction they saw a beautiful apparition emerging from the deep shade of the dark green foliage. It was that of a dainty, fairy-like, girlish figure sitting gracefully upon a small white pony. By her side, on a larger horse of dark color, rode a large, homely and awkward boy, to whose linen roundabout, a pretty, timid-looking little fellow, who was riding behind him, clung nervously as he urged the horse to a brisk gallop to keep up with the rapid pace of the little lady's white palfrey. A negro groom, much encumbered with satchels and carpet-bags, brought up the rear of the cavalcade.

'It is Nellie and Bernard Gardiner going home, and Bob Harrison is going with them,' said Charley.

The two boys had arisen on the approach of the party, but absorbed in watching Nellie's splendid horsemanship, and looking at her pretty face and figure, they had forgotten to move aside, and stood in a position to slightly obstruct the road.

'Get out of the way, fellows,' cried Robert Harrison, rudely and imperiously, bearing down upon them.

They stepped aside instantly, and politely touched their hats to the young lady, while an angry flush mantled Walter's dark cheek, and a smile, half amused and half contemptuously, parted Charley's flexible lips.

Nellie gracefully returned their salutation, and said reproachfully as they swept by, 'O, Cousin Robert, what makes you so rude?'

When they had passed, Charley, who stood looking after the girl with his whole heart in his eyes, observed to his friend, 'Nellie is a pretty little thing.'

'Yes,' replied Walter, regarding her retreating figure with a look half admiring, half speculative, 'very pretty. But she will be still prettier when she gets older; and she will be quite a belle, I expect; for they say she is worth fifty thousand dollars independently of her mother, who is wealthy.'

'How unlike she and Bob Harrison are for cousins,' remarked Charley.

'Very unlike,' was the response. 'Bob Harrison is, undoubtedly, the most conceited, pompous and purse-proud fool that ever lived. I intend to let him see that I am not to be treated with contempt by him, if he does happen to be rich while I am poor. When next he finds occasion to accost me it must be in terms more respectful than those he used just now.'

'Fiddlesticks!' said Charley, 'who cares for what Bob Harrison does? He is beneath the contempt of a sensible body. His airs of superiority, taken in conjunction with his real and apparent inferiority, make him appear so ridiculous that I am more inclined to laugh at than be angry with him.'

'O, you can afford to be philosophical,' replied his friend. 'you are his equal in wealth.'

'But not in birth,' said Charley, smiling, 'at least, according to his standard. The honorable Mr. Harrison thinks me as much, or more his inferior than he esteems you to be. Have you forgotten the ineffable and unutterable contempt with which he called out, on one occasion when I had received at the hands of our school-mates some petty honor which he considered due to his super-eminent station and abilities, 'Charles Foster, the son of a Carpenter!'

'Well,' remarked Walter, 'if your father is a carpenter he has made a large fortune honestly at the trade, and he has won an enviable position in the community by his energy, strong sense and strict integrity. No man in the county possesses the respect and confidence of his fellow-citizens to a higher degree. You have nothing to be ashamed of in him.'

'To be ashamed of,' repeated Charley, warmly; 'I reckon not. It would take a great deal to make me ashamed of my own father. I hope he may never have any more cause to be ashamed of me than I have to be ashamed of him.'

'Halloa! there boys we've been looking for you for an hour,' cried some of their school-mates, approaching from the academy. 'You've missed all the fun. The girls got around Mr. and Mrs. Reed after school, and teased them out of their consent to have the 4th of July ball we'd all been talking about. They've agreed to give up to us, after the examination, the school-rooms and parlor and dining-room, and let us arrange everything as we wish. We're to have fire-works and dancing; and Mr. Reed has promised to show us the Magic Lantern, and all sorts of curious and pretty chemical experiments.'

'Quite a peddler,' said Walter, smiling sarcastically, at what he thought the childish enthusiasm of the speaker.

'Indeed,' said Charley, manifesting a cordial interest in the subject, 'tell me all about it. I am sorry I was not there.'

'O, there is not much to tell, besides what I have already told,' replied the boy. 'There will be a meeting Monday morning before school, to arrange the programme of the entertainment; and if you intend to take part in it, Foster, you had better get your cash ready; for we will have to fork up to the young ladies then, and after the collections are made they will determine, with Mrs. Reed's assistance, what part of the funds must go for the fire-works and what part for refreshments.'

'Let me see what money I have,' said Charley. 'I have been rather extravagant this quarter, and fear I haven't much, and I would not like to go to my father for more, as his allowance is so liberal.' Then taking out his purse he counted the coin out upon his left palm in quite a business-like manner.

He counted ten dollars and a few cents. 'That will do,' said one of the boys; 'I heard Bob Harrison say he meant to give ten dollars.'

'Do, pray, Charley,' said a little boy of the party, 'if Bob Harrison is going to give ten dollars, you try to give twenty just to fret him and make him ashamed; he thinks himself so much richer than anybody else.'

'If I had as much, and it was necessary, Jim, I would willingly give it to contribute to the amusement of the scholars,' replied Charley, 'but not for the purpose of fretting Bob Harrison; he finds enough to fret at without my assistance; and if I should attempt any experiment upon his disposition it would be to make it more amiable.'

After this little dialogue, the boys separated, the new comers to go in search of whortleberries, and Charley and Walter to return to the academy.

When they were alone, Charley remarked to his friend, 'I am glad Mr. and Mrs. Reed have consented that we may have the ball. I expect to enjoy it finely; don't you?'

'I care very little for such things, and do not expect to remain to it,' was the reply.

'Fie!' said Charley, 'you should not be so unsociable. I am afraid that you will end by becoming a misanthrope.'

'It is not that I am unsociable,' replied Walter, 'but between me and every social pleasure my cursed poverty is constantly coming in. Often when you wish me to make a visit with you, I am compelled to decline because my every day-clothes are not good enough to wear, and I dare not wear my single Sunday suit so often, for fear of wearing it out. And now when you and Robert Harrison and others are giving ten dollars apiece to this ball, behold the munificent donation I am prepared to make. So saying, he put his hand deep down in his pocket and drew out a solitary ten cent piece, which he laid in bitter mockery on his open palm. 'When Monday morning comes, I shall be absent from the conference, and so shall witness none of Bob Harrison's impertinence when my name is called, and see nothing of the pity or contempt which the various countenances will express when it becomes apparent that I am not able to contribute to the general pleasure. Charley, do you wonder that I am unsociable?'

'Walter,' said Charley, deeply moved, 'you bear your misfortune too hard; and you are too proud. Why will you not let me help you? I have a plenty for us both; and it would give me more pleasure to share what I have with you than to spend it entirely on myself.'

'Come, Charley Foster,' was the reply, 'you know that you have already loaded me with presents which were offered with so much delicacy and tact that I did not know how to refuse them. I have quite a respectable little library, bearing on the fly leaf of each handsomely bound volume, "To Walter Maynard from his attached friend C. F."; also a valuable gun, and many little things of less value. You have never insulted me yet by offering me money, and I hope you never will; but you have cunningly contrived on many occasions to cover my apparent parsimony and real poverty over with your generosity and liberal expenditure. If you have forgotten these things I have not, nor will I ever. If my voice should ever be raised to denounce you I pray that speech may fail me forever; and if my hand should ever be lifted against you, I trust that it may be stricken from my shoulder.'

Such warmth, and I might add generous emotion, was very unusual with young Maynard, and their exhibition surprised and moved Charley strongly. 'All this is nothing, Walter,' he said, grasping his friend's hand. 'I value your friendship far above such trivial things as money and property, and would delight in rendering more substantial service if you would let me.'

CHAPTER II.

Monday morning found the whole school, composed of about a dozen boarders and twice as many day scholars, assembled in the girls' school-room to discuss the subject of the contemplated fete, and arrange the programme of the evening.

Bob Harrison, whose native impudence stood him in need of many a better quality usually considered essential to success among men, had contrived to make himself chairman of the meeting; and seated in a large arm-chair upon the *estrade*, with an air of dignity and self-importance very disproportionate to the occasion, one pen thrust in the mass of whitish-yellow hair behind his ear, and another awkwardly suspended between his thumb and fore-finger, cut a most ridiculous figure. Charley Foster, at no great distance, with a dry smile of quiet amusement on his countenance, was slyly making a sketch of him in his Latin exercise book, for the benefit of Walter Maynard, who was the only one of Mr. Reed's pupils absent on this interesting occasion.

After having brought the meeting to order, the chairman proposed that the roll should be called, and that each one in answering to his name should mention the sum he or she desired to contribute to the proposed ball, said name and sum to be immediately recorded by the secretary. To this proposition no objection was made and he proceeded with the measure. When Charley's name was called, he answered promptly, and named five dollars as the amount of his contribution. At this announcement, the august chairman elevated his heavy eye-brows, and glancing significantly around the room, with a supercilious smile, said something in an audible whisper to the secretary about 'not expecting blood out of a turnip.'

Charley's fine face flushed, and his merry eyes emitted an angry flash, but it was but momentary; the scene struck him as so ludicrous that involuntarily he burst into a laugh of derision, in which the whole school, except Nellie Gardiner, joined. She was too ashamed and indignant at her cousin's conduct to feel like merriment; and fixing her beautiful eyes earnestly on his countenance, said in her soft, sweet voice:

'Cousin Robert, how can you be so rude?'

Totally unabashed by this demonstration, and maintaining unmoved his imposing dignity, the chairman called the meeting to order, and went on calling the roll. Everything now went on quietly until Walter Maynard's name was called, when some officious body called out, 'Absent.'

'Aha!' exclaimed Mr. Harrison, with a knowing look, 'we all understand the gentleman.'

Thoroughly aroused at this indignity offered to his friend, Charley sprang to his feet, and said hastily: 'Walter is preparing his Greek for recitation; it was inconvenient for him to be present, and he commissioned me to act for him. Write five dollars opposite his name; I will hand it in with mine, to the secretary, at the close of the meeting.'

After this, nothing occurred to mar the general harmony, and Mrs. Reed coming in soon after to assist in their deliberations, everything was satisfactorily adjusted.

The fourth of July arrived in due season, though, to Mr. Reed's impatient pupils, old Time seemed to halt on this stage of his journey. The school exercises for that term were completed, the trying examinations were over, and the delightful bustle of preparation for the fete, which had afforded so many charming episodes to the young ladies and gentlemen of the academy, was ended.

The grounds were brilliantly lighted by colored lanterns, ingeniously constructed of wooden frames, covered with tissue paper, hung among the boughs of the trees. The school-room, newly white-washed and scoured for the occasion, and ornamented with garlands of flowers and evergreens, was set out with long tables, bearing, in the most tasteful arrangement imaginable, a sumptuous repast. And the parlor and dining-room of the academy building, tastefully adorned with vases and garlands of flowers, and appropriate mottoes formed of evergreens, were prepared for dancing, a couple of negro fiddlers occupying a little platform in the hall between the doors opening into each room.

The young gentlemen of the academy, and many of their friends who had arrived early, in all the glory of their best broad-cloth coats, white pants and vests, and kid gloves, were standing about the doors, or in the hall and parlors, awaiting the descent of the charming nymphs, who, in an animated buzz of conversation and laughter, and a delightful rustle and flutter of drapery, were arranging themselves for the ball in the dressing-rooms up stairs.

What charming things are youth and beauty—or even the youth without the beauty! For what does one care for beauty when the rich young blood, unparched by fever, and unchilled by age, is dancing through the veins to the rapid measures of unheard, but not unfelt soul-music, whose inspiring strains vibrate with intoxicating rapture upon every joyous nerve; when the fresh young brain, untaxed by thought or care, teems with quick intuitions and joyous fancies; and when the buoyant young heart, which has never felt the dull, heavy aching of anxiety, or the paralyzing grasp of fear, bounds in a joyous harmony with the thrilling pulses through days of unclouded sunshine and nights of soft slumber and heavenly dreams! How intensely do the young enjoy the pleasures suitable to their years! yea, how intensely do they enjoy everything which is in the least enjoyable! And how refreshing is the contemplation of their happiness to their elders, whose weary heads and tried hearts, robbed by time of the capacity of originating joy, are forced to receive it at second hand, by reflection, as it were.

Some such remark as this Mr. Reed addressed to Mr. Foster, senior, who was standing beside him in one of the parlors, watching his son and several other youths arranging for a dance and urging the musicians to strike up as the surest method of hastening the advent of the young ladies. They were indeed an animated and merry party. Charley was radiant with happiness, and even Walter, who had been prevailed on by his friend to be present, showed in his air and manner an unrestrained gaiety and satisfaction as new to him as it was becoming. He was indeed looking extremely handsome and good-natured. For happiness is a great beautifier, as well as a great moral power. Who ever thought a happy countenance homely? or what happy man ever committed a crime?

Presently, to the great delight of the impatient young gentlemen in attendance, there was a flutter of drapery on the stairs, which announced that the girls were about to descend to the parlors; and in a few moments they hove in sight, preceded by certain benign-looking mammas and aunts who had come to the hall professedly to give character and propriety to the entertainment, but who were really almost as much interested in the contemplated amusement as their young relatives themselves. And when the procession of blushing, smiling Hebes at length entered the beautifully decorated rooms, what a lovely picture they made, with their bright eyes and coral lips, round arms and snowy necks. How beautiful was their shining hair, wreathed with garlands of leaves and buds. And how captivating their supple, delicately-rounded figures, looked draped in fleecy muslin, whose snowy whiteness was only relieved by girdles, or sashes of pink or blue ribbon.

The foremost in this galaxy of youth and beauty, undoubtedly, was Nellie Gardiner. So Charley decided at once, and he whispered as much to Walter as arm-in-arm they started to join her on the other side of the room. She was leaning on the arm of her mother, a delicate, elegant-looking woman, whose bearing was very aristocratic, and whose manners, otherwise affable and lady-like, were tinged with haughtiness, and was pointing out to her the decorations.

'There is the flag you made, mamma,' she said, pointing to the mantel, which was ornamented by the bust of Washington draped in the American flag. The august brow of the Father of his Country was crowned with laurel, and on the wall behind, at a little distance above, was written in living green, 'The American Union,' while a rich garland of English ivy, running cedar, and tissue-paper roses, enclosed both the motto and the bust. Around the room were festoons of flowers, and similarly formed mottoes equally patriotic and appropriate.

Mrs. Gardiner was admiringly inspecting and approving, when our young friends approached. Charley, who was a neighbor and a particular friend of Bernard's, knew her well, but Walter had to be introduced.

She received her son's friend very graciously, and holding out her hand to Walter, said:

'I am happy to make your acquaintance, as I know many of your family. Your Uncle Horace is a particular friend of mine; and I also know your aunts, though I have not met with them recently. Are they here to-night?'

'My Aunt Emeline is present,' said Walter, glancing around the room, 'and will be pleased to meet you. There she is, now, entering the room with Mrs. Reed; shall I bring her to you?'

'We will go to her,' said Mrs. Gardiner, with a smile, and leading the way.

Miss Emeline Maynard belonged to that interesting class of society denominated 'old maids,' and was, moreover, one of the most exaggerated specimens of her class. What was her age it is impossible to say, since that interesting fact, if it was ever recorded, must have been registered among the Apocryphal books of the family bible, it was so very 'uncertain.' The landmarks which time had set upon her face and figure, were utterly ignored and stoutly contradicted by the manners and costume of the lady herself. In her youth, allowing that to have passed, she must have possessed a certain kind of beauty, such as is constituted by plumpness and fairness and vividness of coloring; but the wear and tear of life had greatly impaired, if they had not wholly destroyed it. There was in her countenance none of that higher order of beauty begotten of a cultivated and elevated mind and a heart warmed by the noblest and gentlest affections of humanity; for Miss Emeline's thoughts and desires were all 'of the earth, earthy.' To disguise from others the poverty which was painfully and constantly perceptible to herself, and to secure a husband, had been, from her early years, the chief end and aim of her existence; and although so far unsuccessful, yet, with a diligence and perseverance which, if exerted in a better cause, would doubtless have immortalized her, she was still pursuing the same ends. An occasion offering such opportunities as the present, did not often present itself to her, and she was making the most of it. When Mrs. Gardiner approached her, she was standing between Mr. Tomlin, a spry widower, whose two daughters were among the academy pupils, and Mr. Sloan, Mr. Reed's assistant, twisting her yellow neck and shaking her shadowy, lustreless ringlets with as many coquettish airs and graces as a girl of sixteen. Accustomed though she was to such exhibitions, Walter could not fail to be disgusted, and a shadow passed over his countenance as he approached her. She was flattered by the notice of a lady so wealthy and aristocratic as Mrs. Gardiner, and for a moment loosened her hold on the

patience and politeness of the gentleman, who took advantage of the opportunity to escape to the vicinity of some of the oldest and fairest of Mr. Reed's pupils.

The fire-works were to be exhibited early in the evening, as the moon would rise later and its beams would greatly mar their effect. So, as soon as the guests were assembled, the signal was given, when they all repaired to the porches and grounds to witness their exhibition. When Walter had offered his arm to Mrs. Gardiner to conduct her to his aunt, Charley had very gallantly offered his to Nellie for a promenade; and, therefore, he had the pleasure of conducting her to a rustic seat in the grove, and remaining there with her for an hour during the pyrotechnic exhibition. Walter, who entertained no particular fondness for the fair sex, and whose fastidious taste found something to object to in every one of his young lady acquaintances, except Nellie, was a little chagrined at this; but he had made up his mind, very heroically, to do his duty by escorting his Aunt Emeline, when Charley's father relieved him of the unpleasant necessity by offering his arm to Miss Maynard.

Foster *fits*, who is pretty well known to the reader, was simply a revised and improved edition of Foster *pere*, who is just being introduced. There was a striking resemblance between them in face, figure and carriage, and also in language and manners, except that the superior advantages of education and society which Charley had enjoyed, told in his favor. But though the early years of the elder gentleman had been passed in decent poverty and moderate toil, yet about him there was no coarseness or rudeness to offend the most fastidious. His code of etiquette, suggested by a good mind and a good heart, was sufficiently refined to please in any society, and his language, simple and terse, was generally correct. His simple, innate dignity, straightforward frankness, and unpretending naturalness, afforded a most striking contrast to Miss Emeline's silliness and affectation.

Finding himself thus pleasantly relieved of the care of his aunt, Walter set off to seek Charley and Nellie, and soon joined them in the grove.

When the pyrotechnic exhibition was ended, the dancing commenced, and was continued several hours, after which supper was served; and then Mr. Reed exhibited the Magic Lantern, Drummond Light, &c. Altogether, it was a charming evening, and destined to be remembered as among the happiest in the lives of several of the personages in our story.

During the evening, Charley had extracted a promise from Miss Emeline that Walter should return home with him from the academy and spend several weeks with him. And that lady, pleased with his manners and bearing, and with his father's attentions, without which she must have made an awkward appearance, had also invited him to make Walter a visit during the holidays.

The farm on which Mr. Foster had resided ever since his retirement from business in Richmond, was situated about five miles from that city, near the Mechanicsville turnpike, in an angle formed by the Chickahominy River, or 'Swamp,' as it is called in that vicinity, and the Beaver Dam Creek, a tributary of the Chickahominy. Mrs. Gardiner's estate was located several miles lower down on the 'Swamp,' and beyond the Beaver Dam; and as Charley had no brother and Bernard was an only son, they being school-mates, were often together, and greatly attached to each other, though the latter was some four years younger than the former. During Walter's visit to his friends, they were almost constantly at Mr. Gardiner's, when Bernard was not with them; and a glorious time they had of it, hunting along the banks of the Chickahominy and Beaver Dam, or fishing in those streams or in the pond at Ellyson's Mill, where many nice chub and silver perch were caught. Of course they saw a great deal of Nellie during this time. She frequently made one of the fishing party, and they rode together on horseback almost daily. It would be superfluous to say how much her presence enhanced their pleasure on such occasions; and useless to state how deep were the impressions made upon their young hearts by such delightful and unrestrained intercourse, out in the still, deep forest, beside the rippling waters, and under the bright, warm summer

shies. Three of them, at least, never forgot those charming rides along the smooth country roads, edged with green turf and brilliant wild flowers, and bordered by stumps of a forest, or by straggling rail fences covered over with the magnificent trumpet vine and the luxuriant branches of wild grape and shoe vives. Nor could they fail to remember those delightful rambles along the Chickahominy, when they amused each other by tracing resemblances to Indian warriors and wigwams, in the high, fantastic tops, and gnarled, knotty stumps of the venerable trees around them, which had once shaded the Red Men of the forest, and exercised their memories by narrating such legends and local traditions as had been handed down to them, or their imaginations by weaving little fictions of their own; while Nellie twined garlands of ferns and wild vines, and the boys rippled the dark bosom of the murky, sluggish stream by casting into it little muscle shells gathered along its banks. And in after years, above the richest strains of music, or the deafening roar of cannon and the ceaseless rattle of musketry, each of them could recall the drowsy hum of the mill-wheel, borne to their ears on the soft summer air as they sat on the shady hill-side, with their corks floating idly on the dark waters edging the woods, while the setting sun lit up the broad bosom of the pond with gorgeous rainbow tints, and the soft, sweet sounds of the closing summer day, rising up from the water and the woods, blended in one deep, rich vesper hymn of praise to the God of Nature.

When, after four weeks spent with his friend, Walter was returning home, Charley determined to accept Miss Emeline's invitation and accompany him. His father, who had happened once accidentally to dine at Poplar Lodge, the residences of the Misses Maynard, did not give a very favorable account of the commissariat of the establishment, and Walter had hinted that his aunts were very economical housekeepers; but this did not deter Charley, who laughingly replied to his father's warning by saying that after fasting, as he had done all vacation, he could afford to live one week, like a bear in winter, by sucking his paws.

'Well, my son, you must not let the ladies see you at it,' said the old gentleman, 'for whatever is lacking in bread and meat is made up in etiquette and style. None but the best manners will be tolerated there. Have you never noticed how very punctilious young Maynard is?'

Poplar Lodge was situated on the south side of the Chickahominy, in Henrico county, nearly a point now known as Fair Oak Station, on the York River railroad. It was a neat, snug little place, but very unprofitable to the owners, owing to imperfect cultivation, from the want of sufficient labor, for the Misses Maynard owned no servant except an elderly man and his wife, a half grown boy, and some younger children; and they were not able to hire. Still, with rigid economy, they were able to make quite a genteel appearance. The little square yard which surrounded the house was bordered, inside of the white palings enclosing it, by a formal row of Lombardy Poplars, and laid off in narrow gravel walks edged with flowers, which were Miss Emeline's especial care; while the grass plats they enclosed were kept scrupulously clear of weeds and rubbish by the old man-servant, who had been gardener for Walter's grandfather in the palmiest days of the family, and who delighted in keeping up, as far as their reduced circumstances would permit, all the style and formula which had then been observed. This same old negro—Uncle Tom he would have been called anywhere else in Virginia, but the Misses Maynard called him Uncle Thomas—was quite a character, and reminded Charley, whom his idiosyncracies greatly amused, of the ingenious and attached butler of the Master of Ravenswood. On the first day of his arrival Charley saw him hard at work in a little corn patch near the house all the morning; but when the dinner hour arrived and he and Walter repaired to their chamber to prepare for the meal, Uncle Thomas brought them water and towels, and insisted on helping them to make their toilettes. He was proceeding to brush the suit Charley had rode in, preparatory to hanging it in the wardrobe, when the latter objected, saying, 'Don't trouble yourself to wait on us, Uncle Thomas; I can wait on myself. I have been doing nothing all



"Now, Mars Walter," replied Thomas, reprovingly.

day, and am better able to brush that coat than you, who must be tired with working in the sun.

Indeed, said Uncle Thomas, with dignity, straightening up his bent figure, 'I'm never too tired to wait on my young master's visitors. I don't hurt myself with work; I ain't obliged to work; nobody ever says work to Thomas. But things here ain't on as grand a scale as I was always used to, and there being so many fewer colored folks than I was raised with, and not so much company with the white folks as used to be, I gets sorter lonesome, and jest works for company like, and to set the youngsters a good example and teach 'em industrious habits. We don't keep many of our people at home now, though. The family was unfortunate some years ago, and we had to sell our large estate on the river, and we ain't got room on this little place for all our men, so we hire 'em out in Richmond.'

'I wish you would bring one or two of them home at Christmas, Uncle Thomas,' said Walter, significantly.

'Now what for, Mars Walter?' replied Uncle Thomas, evasively. 'Don't I wait on you well enough—what you want with 'em here?'

Well, then, just allow me the handling of some of the money they hire for, said his young master, mischievously. 'I think it is very selfish in you to spend it all on yourself, Uncle Thomas.'

'Now, Mars Walter, replied Thomas, reprovingly, 'is this the gentlemanly manners me and your aunts has been trying to teach you ever since you was left an orphan to our care, to be misdoubting the word of a colored person, here before strangers.' Then telling the young gentlemen to ring if they wanted anything more, Thomas bowed himself out of the room.

When the boys descended to the dining room, they found him arrayed in a long white apron, with white gloves on and a waiter under his arm, standing gravely behind the head seat of the table, which was set out with a threadbare cloth, and napkins of the finest damask, an antique set of rich china, and various pieces of oddly matched, but handsome plate, all of which were heir-looms in the family and relics of its former grandeur.

The dishes were very small, and there were but few of them; but there was so much form, such a flourishing of napkins and changing of plates, Uncle Thomas was so imposing, Miss Judith so dignified, and Miss Emeline so affable, that, somehow, Charley, who had felt very hungry after his ride, fortunately lost his appetite completely.

At dinner he had an opportunity to scrutinize Miss Judith, whom he had not met before. She was older than Miss Emeline and had given up beaux and taken to caps and spectacles. The latter looked up to her, and was evidently regarded by her sister as quite a young person. Family pride was the ruling trait in her character, and the Maynard family her hobby. Charley had not been twenty-four hours in the house before he had had a minute history of every branch of her family for several generations. Walter, who had been educated to think with her on this subject, was much interested in the topic, and delighted with having his ancient pedigree and high connections paraded before his friend, as an offset to the superior wealth of the Posters.

Charley, whose ideas about such matters were derived from his father, who considered such pride ridiculous, remembered an observation of the latter to the effect that we could all trace our family back to Eve, and she stole an apple, and he came near laughing, inadvertently, in Miss Maynard's face.

Nor did Miss Emeline's views on this subject entirely accord with those entertained by her sister. She still remembered with regret one or two eligible offers which she had rejected at her sister's instigation; because the applicants for her hand were, to express it in Miss Judith's language, "of plain origin;" and she had mentally resolved that this consideration should never weigh with her again in similar circumstances. Unfortunately, however, we fear that her decision was arrived at too late.

After a week spent at Poplar Lodge, during which he had taken many private notes

on the ladies and Uncle Thomas, for the volume on human nature which he was mentally compiling. Charley returned home. The visit, by making him acquainted with Walter's home and relatives, had given him an insight into the character and conduct of his friend which he had never had before. He saw that the cold, hard atmosphere of the false life at the Lodge was not favorable to the growth of those amiable social virtues which, in spite of his partiality, he had mentally acknowledged young Maynard to be deficient in; and he pitied more than he blamed him for the want of them, and resolved, by redoubled affection and kindness, to atone, as far as lay in his power, for the sternness of Miss Judith and the indifference of Miss Emeline.

While the young gentlemen had been amusing themselves as we have described, their families had been preparing for their departure to West Point; for Mr. Foster had yielded to his son's entreaties and consented that he might complete his education there.

The time had nearly arrived for them to leave, and after a few farewell visits made in company, including a very pathetic leave-taking of their former teachers and their favorite haunts about the old academy, they set off on their journey, and were joined in Richmond by Bob Harrison, who was going to the same institution. Neither Charley nor Walter was particularly pleased to have his company; but he was somewhat subdued by the recent parting with his family, and a little cowed at the idea of going among strangers, and so was more endurable than they expected him to be. Still the boys contemplated, with much pleasure, the taking-down that awaited him at West Point.

CHAPTER III.

Four years after the period treated of in the last chapter, on a warm summer afternoon, a hack, or hired carriage, from Richmond, might have been seen proceeding leisurely along the Mechanicsville Turnpike, through a cloud of dust which followed in its track. The two large traveling trunks strapped on behind, a couple of portmanteaus upon the boot, and the same number of well filled carpet bags on the front seat of the coach, indicated that the two handsome young gentlemen, in cadet's uniform, occupying the back seat, had traveled some distance. And, indeed, they had come a good way, having left the highlands of the Hudson only a few days before; for, in spite of their military dress, their broad chests, manly voices and heavy moustaches, we recognize in the travelers our old friends, Walter Maynard and Charley Foster. Their military training had developed their boyish forms into models of manly strength and vigor, and though Charley was still taller and stouter than Walter, yet there was in the lithe figure of the latter a supple grace very pleasing. His face, too, was strikingly handsome, though still less pleasing than Charley's; but his countenance had greatly improved in agreeableness of expression since we last saw him. Those four years at West Point had been happy ones for him, affording, as they did, an opportunity for his ambition to feed upon the applause and distinction which his superior diligence and abilities won for him among his fellow students; and he looked and felt in a better humor with the world than he had ever done before. The two had graduated with honor, but as yet were indecisive in the matter of retaining their commissions in the army. The friendship between them had greatly strengthened during these past four years; and they were dubbed by their mutual friends at West Point, "Jonathan and David." They were, indeed, more like brothers than friends; and the well-filled purse with which Mr. Foster kept his son supplied, ministered alike to the wants of both; for although Walter would not accept money, yet Charley never made a purchase for himself that he did not make a similar one for his friend; and all their furloughs for little excursions to New York, Albany, &c., were always gotten together, when Charley proposed all the amusements and quietly footed

the bills. They were now on their way to Beaver Dam, Charley's home, to spend the summer months.

Walter was leaning back in his corner of the carriage, with his aristocratic little feet crossed on the seat before him, and one hand lightly and gracefully supporting a cigar at which he was slowly puffing away with the practiced air of an adept, while with the other he held a daily paper which he was intently perusing. Charley was leaning out of the carriage, with the stump of a half extinguished cigar between the thumb and forefinger of his right hand, and amusing himself by whistling to a stray cur which was following them, and talking to the driver.

"Do you hear that, Walter?" he said, turning suddenly and addressing himself to his friend. "This uncle says that his wife lives at Mrs. Gardiner's, and that there is to be a large party there to-morrow night, given in honor of Miss Nellie's birthday. Our arrival is just in time."

"Just out of time, you had better say," replied Walter. "They will not hear of it in time to send us invitations."

"O, I will see that they are duly apprised of that circumstance," said Charley, laughing. "I had intended calling on Bernard to-morrow morning, and I shan't let these tidings deter me, I assure you."

"How strange and how delightful," he went on, "it is to be back in old Hanover again, with the privilege of staying as long as one pleases. I say, old fellow, you and I ought to be pretty well versed in military doings; we've been kept close enough at it during the last four years—few and far between our furloughs have been. I dare say the girls about here have quite outgrown my knowledge of them. There is Nellie Gardiner that I haven't seen but once in four years, and that was only for a short time during my first furlough. Whenever I have been home since, she was away at school. I wonder how she looks—whether she is as pretty as ever?"

"Look out and see," said Walter, who had been gazing dreamily down the road, while Charley was talking. "Yonder comes a little gray pony wondrously like the one Nellie used to ride, and a little lady on it wondrously like Nellie herself, while riding with her is a boy I could swear to be Bernard."

Just as they reached the Chickahominy, the carriage and the equestrian party met; and there being a good ford below the bridge, the coachman drove into the stream to water his horses at the very moment that Nellie and Bernard chose the same route. They met, therefore, *vis-a-vis* in that classic stream.

Bernard was the first to recognize them, and cried delightedly, "Good evening! Sister, here are Charley and Walter come home just in time for your party, as you were wishing only the other day."

Nellie, at this, looked up with a pleased smile on the same beautiful face they remembered so well, and approaching the carriage with her brother, held out to them the identical little hand, scarcely an atom larger than they had known it, whose gentle clasp sent the same delightful thrill to their hearts as in the olden time, when they were boys and girl together.

A few moments of delightful conversation they had there, with the cool waters rippling softly around the carriage wheels and the horses' feet, the setting sun gilding the tree tops, and a little cool evening breeze which had come up from the Swamp, refreshing coquettishly with Nellie's floating veil and glossy hair, when the coachman, reminding our travelers that he had to get back to town that night, as his carriage was engaged for an early hour the next morning. Upon this announcement they were prepared to take leave, when Bernard informed them that he had reached the limit proposed by Nellie before starting for their ride, and that as they would be together at Mr. Foster's, they might as well use it to saying good-bye yet.

Before they had proceeded far, it occurred to Charley that Bernard was occupying a very favorable position; and his manner of looking at the girls and smiling at them, an assurance of love. This was really accorded to him, as some one, considering that they

Nellie's side, as proud and happy as a king is generally supposed to be. The equestrian party soon discovered that the dust from the carriage was unendurable, and rode ahead to avoid it. As Walter gazed down the road after them, looking so handsome and so happy, the first bitter feeling that he had ever felt toward his friend sprang up in his breast. He felt jealous and indignant, and thought that Charley had acted ungenerously. Perhaps he had; but who was ever generous in such a matter?

A beautiful woman never looks so enchanting, so ravishingly beautiful, as on horse-back, especially if she rides well; and no woman ever rode more gracefully than Nellie Gardiner. The lingering tenderness for her which had been smouldering in Charley's heart ever since those old days at the academy, was, during that ride, fanned into a flame of love which was destined to burn on the holiest altar in the temple of his heart while life should be granted him in which to cherish human passion. And the glimpses that Walter had that evening of her face and figure, the few tones of her voice which met his ear, and the few glances which fell on him from her melting eyes, kindled, from the ashes of a certain boyish fancy, which had long lain dormant in his bosom, a passion which gave the color to his whole life.

After Mr. and Mrs. Foster had retired for the night, the two friends sat for hours in silence on the porch at Beaver Dam, smoking their cigars, gazing out upon the moonlight, and thinking of Miss Gardiner.

Since they parted with her at the gate, they had not spoken to each other about her, except that Charley had asked—

'Do you think Nellie is much changed, Walter?'

'Only for the better,' was the reply.

'Yes, that is it,' replied Charley, 'only for the better. And what a lovely creature she is—what heavenly eyes, and what bewitching manners! I never saw such graceful ease blended with such charming modesty, or such a beautiful combination of gentleness, dignity, frankness and vivacity in the manners of any woman before; did you?'

'Remember,' replied Walter, curtly, 'that I have not had the same opportunity of observing and analyzing Miss Gardiner's manners that you have, and so am not prepared to pronounce upon them.'

What were their dreams that night, and their waking thoughts the next day up to the time when they set off to the party, to which they had received the most pressing invitations, we will leave the ingenious reader to imagine.

Mrs. Gardiner's residence, as we have said, was but a few miles from Beaver Dam, and situated on the Chickahominy. It was a large wooden building, furnished inside with richness and elegance, and surrounded on the outside by extensive grounds laid off and ornamented with great taste. To-night, the whole house and a large part of the grounds were ablaze with light; and the numerous carriages and horsemen dashing down the avenues and sweeping around the circular carriage drive before the house, the groups of men on the porches, and the glimpses of ladies caught through the partly drawn curtains of the brilliantly lighted dressing-rooms, formed a most animated scene as our two embryo lieutenants approached it.

Before repairing to the dressing-room to adjust their locks and remove from their shining broad-cloth any dust which might have accumulated there during their ride, they stopped on the portico to salute some old school friends. After a short time thus spent in friendly converse, they entered the parlors, which they found quite full.

The matrons and maidens of the Old Dominion were nobly represented by the fairer portion of Mrs. Gardiner's guests. Every style of female beauty was to be seen there, from the calm, fully matured woman, whose manners and mind had been formed by years of intercourse with the world, to the blushing maiden just budding into womanhood—from the dark brunette, with raven hair and eyes of night, to the fairest blonde, whose golden ringlets shaded sapphire eyes and brow of alabaster. Among the shining galaxy, our young heroes thought now, as they had done four years ago, at the Fourth of July ball, that none could compare with Nellie Gardiner. Nor were they alone in

this opinion; for many of the most elegant men in the room were paying their homage at the same shrine; and even the most envious of her own sex could not fail to perceive and were compelled to acknowledge her charms.

She was indeed looking peerlessly beautiful to-night, with her fairy-like figure, draped in a cloud-like robe of embroidered white crape, a berthe of valenciennes lace looped up on her bosom with a pearl breast-cluster of blush roses in her dark brown hair, and pearl bracelets and necklace melting into the whiteness of her beautiful neck and arms. Her large dark eyes, of a deep violet color, and shaded by long, curling lashes of the same hue and shade as her hair, were at once so soft and bright, that every glance thrilled the observer with a strange pleasure, and to-night they were fairly aglow with joyous excitement, while her small mouth and exquisitely moulded chin were wreathed and dimpled with happy smiles. Young, wealthy, beautiful, admired and beloved, just entering upon a life which promised so much joy, why should she not be happy?

Foremost among Nellie's admirers to-night, was her cousin, and our former acquaintance, Bob Harrison, as he would doubtless desire to be called. Time, which effects so many changes, had not failed to leave its impress on Bob Harrison; though outwardly he was somewhat improved, there was no change for the better. At West Point he had associated with the most immoral and dissipated set of cadets connected with the institution, and had committed many rude and disgraceful acts, which, if ventilated, would certainly have procured his expulsion from the academy. Indeed, he had barely escaped being expelled more than once. He got through at the examination, however, taking a very low figure, and escaping disgrace by the very skin of his teeth—yet he passed, as did also, at a previous date, Pope, Burnside, Hooker, and several others of similar mental calibre, who have lately occupied conspicuous positions in the eyes of the world. He expected to make arms his profession, and as his family was wealthy and influential, there was no doubt about his getting a convenient position in the service, though he was a most unprincipled and worthless vagabond. Nellie had never admired him, but as the oldest son of her mother's only brother, she could not help feeling an interest in him and some regard for him. Still, she was not inclined to submit to his monopolizing her society entirely, as he seemed inclined to do, and she contrived to dispense her favors quite equally among her numerous admirers.

Lieutenant Foster, who went into any matter that engaged his attention with his whole soul, contrived to obtain quite a liberal share of her smiles; and Maynard, who was equally energetic, though less enthusiastic, succeeded in securing her hand several times during the dance, and had quite a delightful tete-a-tete during the evening. They were both perfectly satisfied with the progress they had made, and, intoxicated with bliss, returned to Beaver Dam just before dawn to dream of Elysium.

The party at Mrs. Gardiner's was followed, within the next few weeks, by half a dozen others, including one at Mr. Harrison's residence, on the Pamunkey river, and one at Mr. Foster's. Several of Nellie's school-mates were visiting her, and Mrs. Gardiner's house was constantly thronged with company, among whom might be found, almost daily, Walter and Charley. True, they found time occasionally, in the intervals between dinners and tea-parties, the pic-nic excursions, and rides and walks upon which they were constantly attending Miss Gardiner and her friends, to ride over to Poplar Lodge and pay their respects to the ladies, and cultivate the acquaintance and good will of Uncle Thomas.

Walter, whose penetrating eye had long been accustomed to read every feeling and thought of Charley's transparent soul, had seen a rival in him from the beginning, and in view of his fine pecuniary prospects, handsome person, and fascinating manners, considered him quite a formidable one. But Charley, blinded by the intensity of his own passion, failed to penetrate the cold, calm exterior of his undemonstrative friend. Accustomed for years to confide to Walter every opinion and emotion, Charley would have confessed his love for Nellie and sought his sympathy, had he not considered it a matter too sacred to be discussed with a third party.

As for Nellie herself, it was impossible to discover, from her manners and conduct, which one of her numerous admirers, if any, had received her heart's election; for though too pure and dignified to condescend to coquetry, yet the kindness of her nature, and the politeness of her manners, led to such an equal distribution of her favors, that each was left in doubt whether he was not the favored one.

This being the condition of affairs, when Mrs. Gardiner, Nellie and Bernard, Bob Harrison, and some others among their intimate friends, proposed, several weeks after the party, to visit the Virginia Springs, Charley determined to accompany them; and with his usual generosity, invited Walter to go with him. Knowing that his friend's whole soul was enlisted in his suit with Miss Gardiner, and determined to supplant him, if possible, Walter accepted the invitation and submitted to have his expenses paid by his rival, that he might bask in the smiles of his mistress.

At the springs new triumphs awaited the Hanover belle, as Nellie was termed. Scores of lovers were added to her train, and so closely was she besieged by their attentions, that it was only by the utmost assiduity that her old friends could sometimes secure her hand for a dance, or her company for a promenade. Yet the rarity of this pleasure so enhanced its delight, that the party found the time pass rapidly and pleasantly. All the chilly air of September made a longer stay among the mountains undesirable, and hastened their departure for their homes.

In the whirl and excitement of the public life at the watering places, but little opportunity had offered for private love-making, and the relations sustained between our young friends had therefore remained in *status quo*. But a few days after their return, Walter, who was then at Poplar Lodge, received a communication from the War Department, summoning him to repair immediately to Washington to receive his commission, and be assigned to duty. As his absence would doubtless be a long one, and his mission probably very distant, he resolved to see Miss Gardiner before setting out on his journey, and confess his love and tender her the offer of his hand. With this view, he arrayed himself in his most befitting costume, and mounting his horse, set off for Fairfield, Nellie's home.

When he arrived, the servant who met him at the door, replied to his inquiry whether his young mistress was in, by saying that she was at home, but not in the house. She had been walking in the garden, and was now sitting in the honey-suckle arbor. Thinking that this was a most suitable place for the purpose he had in view, Walter declined entering the house, and resolved to join her there. The location of the honey-suckle arbor was well known to him, as he had often sat there with the ladies, it being a favorite resort of the Gardiners and their guests. So, walking leisurely, with his usual careless tread, he threaded the labyrinth of walks leading through a wilderness of shrubbery to his lady's bower.

In the solitude of his spirits, he had forgotten to inquire whether she was alone, and on nearing the arbor, was struck with surprise at seeing some one with her. But it was not simply disappointment at finding the opportunity he had desired for his declaration frustrated that stopped him breathless to the spot. Nellie's companion was his most ardent rival, Charley Foster; and he saw, at a glance, that the looks which were dwelling on his lips were then being breathed into her willing ear by a voice whose witchery he had reason to dread. And the hand which he would have given worlds to call his own, was at that moment trembling in the warm clasp of his rival, who bending forward, with his eloquent eyes fixed on the maiden's face, was saying, in a deep voice, tremulous with emotion:

"I know that it is great presumption on my part. I am not and can never be worthy of you, and all that I have, the whole homage of my heart, the devotion and service of my life, I lay at your feet; will you accept them?"

The sweet lips slightly parted, more quivering than usual, and the long golden lashes of her downcast eyes swept her cheeks, crimson with blushes; but calming her tremulous



"And, on nearing the arbor, was struck with surprise at seeing some one with her."

tion, she raised her large eyes, melting with tenderness, to her lover's face, and said in a soft tone, scarcely audible: 'It is the most precious boon that earth could offer me; I accept it with pride and pleasure.'

An expression of ecstasy lighted up Charley's face.

'My own!' he exclaimed, in his deep, tender voice, pressing the hand he held passionately to his lips; 'my own!'

'Yes, forever,' murmured Nellie.

Young, and fair, and graceful, as they both were, they made a beautiful tableau in that attitude, with the golden autumn light playing over them, and the flowering branches of the honey-suckle twining around them.

A scene so exquisite as the one we have attempted to describe, would, if acted on the boards of any theatre in christendom, have elicited down thunders of applause from the most intelligent and discriminating audience ever assembled; but no sound escaped the single spectator, who stood transfixed. With emotions, such as Satan is supposed to have felt, when lost and undone he gazed upon the beauties and the bliss of Eden, Walter looked upon the tableau before him, then noiselessly retracing his steps, left the garden, with a heart as heavy as the one Adam bore with him from Paradise.

Arriving at the house, he entered the parlor, and taking up a book, pretended to read, while he awaited Charley's and Nellie's return.

In about half an hour they came in, looking very bright and happy, and quite pleased and surprised to see him there.

He met them with his usual calmness and self-possession, and seemed quite as cordial as ever. The keenest eye could not have discovered in his serene exterior any trace of the volcanic fire of passions surging and flaming in his breast. Wildly as he loved Nellie Gardiner, he felt towards her the keenest resentment, that she should have preferred another to him; and oh, how he hated Charley Foster. Yet, he disguised it all, and sat with them nearly an hour, discussing the most ordinary topics in the most commonplace manner. When he arose to take his leave, he said to Nellie:

'I have been summoned to report in Washington to be assigned to duty. Miss Gardiner, and expecting to leave very shortly, I called this afternoon to bid you adieu. I shall probably not have an opportunity of visiting Virginia again very soon, and so shall not have the pleasure of meeting you again in a long time; but permit me to offer you my best wishes for your happiness in saying farewell.'

'And you, too, Charley, will accept the same,' he added turning to Charley, without heeding the expressions of surprise and regret they were both uttering.

'Oh, no, not yet,' said Charley; 'return home with me and spend the night at Beaver Dam, and stay with me until you leave for Washington.'

'I shall leave to-morrow, before dawn,' replied Walter, 'and so cannot accept your invitation, though I thank you for it.'

Charley followed him out upon the porch, and clinging to his hand, said:

'I can not give you up, old fellow; I really do not know how to get along without you. But for one thing, I would pack up and be off with you. Write soon and often, for I shall miss you sadly.'

'Oh, you will forget me in a little while,' said Walter, laughing lightly, as he sprang down the steps.

CHAPTER IV.

About two weeks after his arrival in Washington, while he was busily engaged in preparing for service, Walter was surprised to receive the following letter from Charley:

'MY DEAR OLD CHUM:—I have concluded not to give up my commission, and write to request that you see Col. B. and endeavor to secure for me, through his influence, an

agreeable position in the army. I prefer active service and immediate duty. If such a thing is possible, I would like also to be in the same company, or at least in the same regiment with you. Do, please try and get it so arranged. I would spare you all this trouble by going to Washington myself, if it were not that I sprained my ankle yesterday, while fox hunting.

And now, knowing that you must be surprised at this sudden decision, and curious to know the cause of it, I will explain it all. You, from whom I never kept a secret before, will be astonished to learn that ever since our return from West Point—yea, as I have lately discovered, ever since I have known her—I have loved Nellie Gardiner, and that on the very evening of your farewell visit to Fairfield, I told her of my love. My confession was very flatteringly received, and she consented to yield me her hand in marriage, if I could gain her mother's consent to our union. In due season I waited on Mrs. Gardiner, and respectfully requested her consent to my forming an alliance with her daughter. My petition was coldly and haughtily received, and peremptorily refused. I respectfully requested to be made acquainted with the grounds of her opposition, when she candidly admitted that to myself, personally, she had no objection, but that the disparity in our rank was too great to make such a connection desirable—she would never consent to have her daughter, in whose veins mingled the blood of four Governors and one President, marry the son of a carpenter.

You may imagine, Walter, if you can, what my feelings were. However, I maintained my composure; I did not tell her that 'her sex protected her,' but I thought it timely reminded her very politely, that the man who maintained toward our Saviour, the relation of an earthly father, was a carpenter. To this she vouchsafed no reply.

At my request, she consented that Nellie and I should have a parting interview, but she assured me very positively that it must be the last.

Nellie was much grieved at the reception her mother had given my suit, and indignant that I should have been insulted by being treated as an inferior. Her mother, she said, was by her father's will, her legal as well as natural guardian, and that during her minority she would not offend her by marrying against her wish, but that in three years she would be twenty-one years of age, and mistress both of herself and fortune, when she would bestow them on your unworthy friend and humble servant. Of course, I thanked the dear girl with all my heart for her unmerited generosity. We agreed then to wait until she should have attained her majority; and, having the utmost faith in each other, we have no doubt of the final consummation of our wishes.

This being the condition of affairs, you know that it would not be very convenient or proper for me to remain in this vicinity; hence my sudden decision to enter the army. Of course all that I have told you is in the strictest confidence, for the compact between Nellie and myself is a profound secret, though the affair of my addressing Miss Gardiner, and being rejected by her mother, has been for a week under discussion by the Grundys, through the agency of Bob Harrison, I believe. Nellie informed me at our last interview that he was a lover of her's, and that his suit was greatly favored by her mother and his father.

Be sure to attend promptly to my request, and let me know the result as soon as possible.

Very truly, yours,

C. FOSTER.

To this communication Charley received, at an early day, the following reply:

'DEAR CHARLEY:—Immediately on the receipt of your letter, I called upon the gentleman you mentioned, and communicated your request to him. There was no difficulty in getting you an agreeable position, and in a few days you will be ordered to report for duty. You will not be able, however, as you seemed to desire, to enter upon active service in the field, for it has been determined to place in the corps now organizing for the expedition to Utah only such officers, and, as far as practicable, men who have seen service in the field. In order to do this, it is necessary to withdraw the gar-

ison from several of our forts, and substitute raw troops in their place, and among these latter you and I are assigned to duty. Captain Williams, whom you already know slightly, has been appointed commandant at Fort Alexander, in the Northwest, and before I received your letter I had been promoted and appointed First Lieutenant under him. The other lieutenants are still unfilled, and Bob Harrison, who has just arrived in Washington, designed applying for the place of Second Lieutenant, but Colonel B. had been before him and obtained it for you, so Bob had to be contented with the junior rank. So little as we like him, it seems that we are to be associated with him again. Really, there seems to be some strange fatality at work in the matter.

As for the second part of your letter, I was not so much surprised as you seemed to expect. I must have been blind not to have discovered the state of your affections some months since. But I must confess that Mrs. Gardiner's conduct did astonish me no little, in view of her apparent partiality for you, and the pleasure she seemed to take in your society. I have heard her refer Bernard to you frequently as a worthy model, and so, I am sure, has Miss Gardiner. However, I suspect she is influenced in this matter, as she is said to be in many others, by her brother, Mr. Robert Harrison, senior. He doubtless thinks that it would be a fine thing for the hopeful Bob to step into such a dowry as Miss Gardiner's, with a reversionary right to one half of her mother's splendid fortune. But if he expects to make a useful and worthy member of society of this same hapless scapegrace, he will, in my opinion, be vastly mistaken. Bob himself, I am persuaded, has no idea of such a thing; he seems, judging from his West Point career and his secret exploits in Washington, to be bent only on sowing his wild oats, and I will predict that he 'seeds a large crop' of them, to speak in the agricultural parlance of Old Virginia.

I hear that he is not much pleased since you and I rank him, and spoke of throwing up his commission, but his friends here told him frankly that nothing better could be obtained for him, in consequence of his poor standing at West Point, and persuaded him, if he wished to make arms his profession, to remain where he was. Now we know very well, that in the choice of his profession, Bob is not at all influenced by bravery or a love of glory, for he is quite innocent in both. He would greatly prefer remaining at home, with nothing to do except spend money; but his father, who has a good many children to provide for, and is said to be heavily in debt, is determined to quarter him on 'Uncle Sam.'

To-morrow I expect to set off for Fort Alexander. Hoping to be joined by you there soon, I remain, as ever,

Your friend,

W. MAYNARD.

A few weeks later than the date of this correspondence, found Walter and Charley domiciled at Fort Alexander. The garrison there was not large, but it was mainly composed of raw recruits, and the task of instructing these in their military duties, and enforcing their performance of them, was an arduous one. The commandant being in delicate health, and often incapable of performing duty, almost the whole labor devolved upon his subordinates. The First and Second Lieutenants acquitted themselves creditably in their responsible situations, but the utter incapacity of the Third, or 'brevet,' as he was styled, was glaringly apparent. Indeed, Bob Harrison, so far from being a help, was a decided hindrance. He shirked his duties in every possible way, and when he was forced to the performance of them, he was so overbearing, tyrannical, and insulting, that he frequently provoked insubordination among the men, which it required all the authority and address of his superior officers to quell. Had these officers been any others than Lieutenants Maynard and Foster, who knew him well, and had been accustomed to bearing with his follies, he would have been court-martialed within the first month. Even their patience grew exceedingly threadbare under the constant usage to which it was subjected by their quondam school-mate and fellow-countyman.

The Fort was situated in a wild and picturesque country, abounding in game, and affording many charming prospects; and when their military duties would permit, Walter and Charley amused themselves by hunting among these vast wilds, or sketching such views as they considered very fine. They saw but little of Lieutenant Harrison, except on parade and at the mess-table, for his leisure hours were mostly passed at the public houses of Luray, a thriving little village a few miles from Fort Alexander.

Being constantly with Walter, and having his mind and heart always full of one subject, Charley spoke frequently of Nellie and of the relation between them; but to his surprise he soon saw, in spite of his friend's self-command, that it was a most unpleasant theme, that it always left him impatient, gloomy and morose. Slowly the truth dawned upon him; but when at last his mind had conceived a well-defined suspicion, he was soon enabled, by close observation and various experiments, to confirm it beyond a doubt. The discovery gave him intense pain; and he ceased to speak on a theme, which being so unpleasant to his friend, was no longer a pleasant one to him, at least in their intercourse.

Walter was very glad when Charley ceased to speak to him of his love and his hopes, for reminding him, as it did, of his own disappointment and mortification, it nearly maddened him. He did not for a moment suspect the cause of his silence on the subject; he only knew that he had strenuously avoided the topic, and he thought that his friend had attributed his conduct to the indifference with which he professed to regard such matters. Indeed, he seemed to have become quite a cynic—criticised the follies and frailties of the fair sex unmercifully, and ridiculed the idea of love as absurd and preposterous; while at the moment, disappointed passion was consuming his very vitals; when crushed affections were sounding through his soul a wail of woe ever audible to him above the call of duty or the voice of pleasure; and when jealousy, with its poisonous fangs, fastened deeply in his heart, was fast eating out all that was noble and good in his nature. His disposition was not naturally a good one, and his early training had tended rather to aggravate than improve it; but in his long and intimate intercourse with Charley Foster, he could not fail to imbibe some good from a character so overflowing with all that was noble and generous. He could not be misanthropical with such a lovely specimen of manhood always before him, continually exciting his admiration, commanding his respect, and challenging his emulation. The natural bias of his mind to intrigue and chicanery, was temporarily overcome by the influence of a character so eminently honest and ingenuous as young Foster's; and his natural moroseness was, in a great measure, dispelled by the broad beams of love and good-nature which were constantly being radiated from Charley's warm heart and cheerful countenance. At least, such was the influence which his friend had exercised over him while their friendship and mutual love was unimpaired—but alas, upon that friendship, so warm and long, so sincere, jealousy, cruel as the grave, had now intruded. Only the noblest natures can forgive and continue to love a successful rival, and Walter's was far from being a noble nature. Charley soon perceived a great change in him, and noted with pain that Maynard's manner's, always so cordial and unconstrained to him, were beginning now to wear for him the same restraint and reserve that marked them with others; that the few fitful gleams of the olden kindness and confidence, were alternately obscured by coldness, or by a peevish impatience very hard to bear with. Knowing and pitying the cause of the change, he endeavored to overcome Walter's ill-feeling by increasing kindness and cordiality on his part; but when he found his efforts unavailing, and saw that they only increased the evil they were designed to remedy, he became offended in turn, and desisted from them. Thus, without any formal disagreement, the two were becoming gradually more and more alienated from each other.—Charley, whose affections were very ardent, felt and regretted the estrangement acutely, the more so as at the fort they were almost entirely cut off from any other society. And what added to his chagrin greatly, was the circumstance that Walter, while voluntarily renouncing his friendship, was beginning to court that of Bob Harrison.

To explain Lieutenant Maynard's conduct, it is only necessary to say, that far from subduing his love for Nellie Gardiner, as he had at first designed attempting to do, he had permitted it to hold unbridled sway in his breast, and had suffered it to feed on the wildest and most absurd hopes. He had secretly rejoiced at Charley's ill-success with Mrs. Gardiner, and regarded the delay which her opposition had occasioned to the lovers as a respite granted to him—a reprieve, such as the condemned criminal hails with joy. With what satisfaction did he repeat the old and homely, but forcible adage, 'There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip'; and how ardently did he long for that 'slip' which would dash the cup of happiness from Charley's lip, that, as he fondly hoped, he might press it to his own. Often had he racked his brain for some scheme by which he might effect his desire; but none offered of sufficient plausibility to sanction an attempt. He weekly saw, with growing rage and jealousy, a tender missive, in the form of a delicately scented and exquisitely directed letter, placed in Lieutenant Foster's hand; and he frequently speculated upon the expediency of tampering with this charming correspondence; but he was not quite base enough for such villainy, and so the temptation was resisted. In the meantime, though despising Bob Harrison heartily, he commenced cultivating his good will, with a view to making him useful in the future.

CHAPTER V.

The member of the garrison at Fort Alexander, who, next to Bob Harrison, gave most trouble to the officers, and created most disturbances among his comrades, was a private, a young foreigner, in whose features, accent and character, the distinguishing traits of the French and Italian were strangely mingled. He was very young, exceedingly active and handsome, with a fine musical ear and a superb voice, which was often called into requisition to enliven the garrison. In his character were blended the sparkling vivacity of the French and the deep passionate nature of the Italian, and while the former quality made him rather a favorite with both men and officers, the latter often led him into scrapes with the former, which sometimes brought down upon him the chastisement it was the duty of the latter to inflict. The offensive and tyrannical manners of Lieut. Harrison often provoked him to insubordination, and he was frequently in trouble, from which Lieut. Foster, whose good nature often got the better of his strict notions of military duty, had frequently been able, by intercession with his superiors, to extricate him. Toward his second lieutenant, therefore, Le Brun, for that was the man's name, entertained the warmest feelings of gratitude and affection, while the third lieutenant was hated with all the intensity of his nature, though he dare not indulge in an open expression of his sentiments. Lieut. Maynard, too, for no particular reason except the haughtiness of his manners and the strictness of his discipline, was regarded by him with strong aversion.

At length, about six months after his arrival at Fort Alexander, Le Brun, whose offences had been comparatively slight, was guilty of a glaring breach of military duty, which subjected him to the severest chastisement, except capital punishment, which it was in the power of the court-martial to inflict. The patience of his officers had been so tried, by his frequent derelictions of duty, that even Charley unhesitatingly coincided in the decision of his superior officers against the culprit. He was, therefore, awarded his sentence of punishment, and the day set for its public execution.

A few hours after the decision of the case was made known to the garrison, Lieut. Foster's servant entered the room where he was sitting alone, and informed him that there were two ladies without desiring to see him. Expressing his surprise at such an unwonted circumstance, and hastily making such changes in his toilet as he thought the occasion required, he bade the man usher them in.

In a few moments the servant returned with the visitors. They were both dressed in black, and closely veiled; but the gait and the outlines of the figure of one of them showed her to be an elderly woman; while the easy carriage, elastic step and pliant grace of the elegantly rounded figure of the other, bespoke for her youth and beauty, even without a glance at the features so closely concealed by the envious veil.

When he had seen his visitors seated, Charley addressed some commonplace remark, the first that offered itself, about the weather or the season, to the elder lady.

'She speaks no English,' said the young lady, in a peculiarly rich, soft voice, and with a strong, but interesting foreign accent, at the same time lifting her veil and disclosing a strikingly beautiful face, lighted up by a pair of the most magnificent black eyes our young friend had ever seen.

'But you do, I am pleased to observe, Mademoiselle,' said Lieut. Foster, with a bow and smile.

'Yes,' she replied, 'I speak your language with tolerable ease and correctness, but not as fluently as I speak the French and Italian tongues; and if Monsieur prefers, I will state my petition in either of those languages—for we are come as petitioners.'

Charley hastened to assure her that, from the specimen he had heard of it, her English would much better bear experimenting with than his French, and that he was so unfortunate as to have no knowledge of the Italian. He also expressed an interest in learning what had procured him the honor of an interview with Mademoiselle, and assured her that it would give him great pleasure to serve her.

'We are relatives of Victor Le Brun, the private in your company, who has just been sentenced to suffer a cruel and ignominious punishment,' said the girl, 'and having often heard him speak of your clemency and kindness, we have come, Monsieur, to beg that you will exert your influence in procuring a commutation of his sentence.'

This was said in a voice so plaintive, and at the same time she fixed her fine eyes on his face with a look so melancholy and so wistful, that Charley felt his compassion greatly excited.

After a little pause, Lieut. Foster told her, in the gentlest terms, and with the mildest manner he could, that he feared his intercession would be of no avail, as Le Brun had so often abused the clemency shown him, that the officers were now persuaded that nothing but the strictest measures would meet his case.

'I know that he is wayward and intractable,' she replied, 'but he has some good left in him still, which, if properly cultivated, may yet make him a useful man. I know him well enough to feel assured that harshness, so far from subduing, will only exasperate him and make him desperate. If he suffers his sentence, Monsieur, it will be the ruin of him. He will desert, and leading a wandering, vagabond life, will be forever lost to me. Listen,' she said, growing excited and enforcing her language with a number of graceful and impassioned gestures, 'and I will tell a little story which must excite your compassion.'

'My father was a Frenchman and an artist, and early in life left his native city of Paris to study art among the works of the great masters in Rome. There he married my mother, and there they lived very happily during the first ten years of my life. My father's paintings began to be much admired, and his studio was frequently visited by strangers sojourning in Rome. At length, an American gentleman, a merchant of New York, persuaded him to remove to that city, promising him a lucrative patronage there. We removed to America, and by the kind efforts of our patron, my father at once received a large number of orders for paintings, which being satisfactorily executed, led to his being established among the artists of New York. Still, his gains were small, though larger than in Italy; for art is not very lucrative, Monsieur, either in Italy or America; in the former country the people have nothing to pay, and in the latter they have but little appreciation for its beauties; so when he died, two years ago, he left us almost penniless. My mother had died shortly after our arrival in America, and our kind benefactor was also dead; but his daughter aided me by procuring me a number

of pupils to whom I gave lessons in music, painting, Italian and French. This lady, my father's sister, pointing to her companion, managed our little household, and we would have been very comfortable and happy but for one thing. Victor had always possessed a wayward disposition, and an ungovernable temper, and by association with the wild, bad youths of the city, contracted many vicious habits, which grieved us greatly. And, at length, Monsieur, about a year after my father's death, he was sent to the House of Correction for a term of twelve months. At the end of that time he was released, and the very day after his arrival in New York, meeting with a recruiting officer, he enlisted in the United States army. As soon as we learned his destination, my aunt and myself sold our little effects in New York and removed to Luray, to be near him, that we might have him as much as possible under our influence. He is fond of a military life, only he finds the discipline rather strict, and here he seems happier and better than I ever knew him. He has a passionate admiration for you, Monsieur, and if you will only save him from this cruel degradation, you will be able to command him ever afterward. But if he suffers this punishment he will be lost forever. O, save him,' she cried, 'he is my only brother, all that is left me in this world to love and care for. Save him, for the love of the Holy Virgin—pardon me, Monsieur, I forgot that you are a protestant—but pardon him, for the sake of the Almighty God, upon whose name we all call, and from whose mercy we all hope for pardon.'

At this crisis, the elder woman, perceiving from the manner and accent of her niece, that the case was an extreme one, fell to weeping, and falling on her knees before Lieut. Foster, besought him in doleful accents to *pardonnez* and *sauvez son pauvre neveu, ce garçon malheureux qui était orphelin, et qui n'avait pas d'amis*.

Charley raised her up, and begging her to be seated, promised to do his utmost to obtain a pardon for Le Brun, or at least a commutation of his sentence.

By exerting himself to the utmost, and with great difficulty, our young friend was able to make good his promise to Le Brun's relatives, and relieve the anxiety and distress of his interesting sister. At his request she had given him her address, that he might be able to report to her from day to day the progress he was making in his suit, and several times he found it convenient to call on her in Luray, and report in person. She and her aunt were occupying two rooms in a small cottage, in the suburbs of the village, and though their lodgings were but poorly furnished, yet the genius and tastes of Mademoiselle Le Brun had been able to impart to them an air of refinement and elegant elegance. The aunt had found employment in doing fine needle work for the wealthier villagers, and Mademoiselle was giving music lessons and painting miniatures for a livelihood. Charley desired that she would paint two miniatures of himself, one for his mother and the other for Nellie, thinking, by paying her liberally, to assist so noble a girl in her struggle with the world. Although she had hitherto refused to paint gentlemen, yet she consented to accommodate him, in view of his kindness to her brother, and as soon as Victor's case was satisfactorily disposed of the sittings commenced.

Mademoiselle was an accomplished artist, and while she sat at her work with her white fingers glancing in the sunlight as she rapidly and gracefully plied the brush, and her fine eyes, elegantly veiled by her long, dark lashes, or raised to his face with all their midnight splendor beaming full upon him in a scrutinizing gaze, she talked to Charley, in her soft Italian accent and her pretty French vivacity, of Italy and Rome—of the bright skies and balmy air of the one, and the magnificent ruins of the other. She had spent days with her father in the galleries of the Vatican, gazing with rapture on the sublime works of old masters gathered there, and hours with him sitting amid the ruins of the Colosseum, or wandering by the Tiber, talking of the mighty past and dreaming over the sad present of the 'Queen of the World'—the 'Night of Nations.' Possessed of a fine memory and rare descriptive powers, her sketches of the scenes of her childhood were extremely interesting to our enthusiastic young Virginian.

After an hour or so of brilliant conversation, about beauty and stars with rare adaptation, he heard her alternately quote Virgil, Homer, Racine and Shakespeare, each

in the original, and saw her at will, lay down the pencil to take up the lyre, Lieutenant Foster thought that he had never seen a woman so brilliant and accomplished; and he marvelled at the strange Providence which had made this noble, gifted creature the sister of Victor Le Brun, and placed her, poor and friendless, among the comparatively half civilized population of Luray, out in the backwoods.

Out off from all other female society, he found that of Mademoiselle Le Brun doubly charming; and had his nature been less stable and faithful, and his love for Nellie Gardiner less firmly interwoven with his childhood's happy memories, we fear that the little Virginia maiden, though beautiful and noble-hearted, with her slight knowledge of the world, and her slender stock of boarding-school accomplishments, would have been supplanted by the interesting Italian. As it was, his heart remained faithful, though he admired Mademoiselle greatly. And by the time the miniatures were completed and dispatched to their destination, with a glowing description of the fair artist, he had prevailed on her to give him regular drawing lessons, and to permit him to exercise his rusty French by almost daily readings or conversations with her. Although in her gratitude she wished these favors to be rendered gratuitously, yet young Foster insisted on paying most liberally for her lessons, and besides, sent many presents of books and magazines to Mademoiselle's study-table, and of game to the cuisine of her aunt.

At length his frequent visits to the cottage of Luray began to be noticed, and were made the subject of remark at the mess table. Some of the officers, among others, Lieutenant Maynard, who had passed Miss Le Brun on the streets of Luray occasionally, but had not been able to judge of her beauty, as she always wore a veil abroad, professed to feel quite a curiosity to see a lady so charming as the fair Italian seemed to be, and requested Lieutenant Foster to introduce them at the cottage.

Now, often when he had felt the spell of her fascinations strongest upon him, Charley had wished that Walter could see Mademoiselle, and had speculated, whether if he could meet with her, her brilliant beauty and charming conversation might not be able to make him forget his unfortunate love for Nellie Gardiner. He felt confident that such would be the result of an acquaintance, and he had been several times on the point of inviting Lieutenant Maynard to accompany him to the cottage, but the growing coldness between them had hitherto prevented his doing so. Now, however, that Walter had himself proposed it, he eagerly accepted the proposal, and named an early day for the visit.

On the other hand, Walter's quick eye had already observed and had watched with delight Charley's growing intimacy with the Italian girl. Falsely presuming his gaiety and good nature to betoken a shallow and fickle disposition, he had no doubt that Miss Le Brun, if but the half he had heard of her were true, would supplant Miss Gardiner in his rivals affections. Anxious to see how far he had been correctly informed as to that young lady's charms, and how far Lieutenant Foster had been influenced by them, he resolved on a visit with him to the cottage.

Desiring to have Mademoiselle impress Walter favorably, Charley, as soon as he had introduced him, led her to talk on those subjects about which he had observed her to be most enthusiastic, called for those songs which she sung best, and prevailed on her to exhibit her drawings to his friend. Pleased with the attentions and conversations of two gentlemen so polite and intelligent, the lady was even more affable and interesting than usual, and astonished Lieutenant Maynard by the grace of her manners and the brilliancy of her conversation. Delighted to find her so fascinating, he immediately judged from the impression her charms had made on him during one short interview—cold and calculating

as he knew his nature to be—that they must, during an intercourse of several months, have completely captivated the imagination and enthralled the heart of his ardent and susceptible friend. This conviction so pleased him, and Mademoiselle's conversation and music were so enlivening, that he became more animated and cheerful, more like the Walter Maynard of West Point, than Charley had seen him for a long time. Attributing this happy change in his friend entirely to pleasure in Miss Le Brun's society, Lieutenant Foster mentally congratulated himself on the success of his scheme, and thought, as he watched the animated play of their handsome features, and listened to the pleasant tones of their cheerful voices, what a fine couple they would make.

Thus mutually deceived, after a visit of several hours, the two friends left the cottage, pleased with each other, Mademoiselle, and all the world.

But Walter's complacency was a little disturbed when on calling at the cottage a few days after, partly with the desire of hearing Mademoiselle converse, and partly with the expectation of finding Charley there, he discovered the fair artist standing before her easel and giving the finishing touches to an exquisite painting representing the honey-suckle arbor at Fairfield, with Charley and Nellie seated in it, almost in the same position they had occupied on the evening of his last visit there.

At the sight of it he started and turned pale; but Mademoiselle, who stood with her back to him, and who, in the intense interest of her occupation had mistaken him for Lieutenant Foster, did not observe this. Without turning, while she lightly and skillfully retouched some of the vine tendrils straying around the figures, she asked, in a low, soft voice:

'Does it please you, Lieutenant?' I did not intend that you should see it again until it should be quite finished, but you have taken me by surprise; I did not expect you until to-morrow. However, you can tell whether the lady is right, at last. I have deepened the blush on the cheek, and lengthened the eye-lashes; as you suggested, but these daguerreotypes are such poor things to copy from, that I doubt whether I have succeeded. The arbor was a simple affair, and easily copied from your sketch, and your portrait, my aunt thinks, is excellent—but is the lady right?' she repeated, turning towards him.

'It could not be better,' replied Walter, bowing gracefully, as her eye fell on him. 'Permit me to congratulate you, Mademoiselle, on your perfect success, and to say that I have seldom seen a more beautiful picture.'

Mademoiselle started slightly at his address, and it was evident the surprise of his appearance was not altogether a very pleasant one. But she returned his greeting very politely, and replied to his observation by saying she deserved no credit for the picture, except for such manual skill as had been displayed in copying from the more perfect works of nature, which had made both Lieutenant Foster and his companion very fair.

'This is a little secret between your friend and myself,' she said, pointing to the picture. 'He entreated me to let no one but my aunt see it while I was painting it, and I had obeyed his request until you surprised me.'

'Do not let that trouble you,' said Walter. 'It will make no difference at all with Lieutenant Foster. I am well known to the lady, and an old friend of his, and have long been acquainted with the relations existing between them.'

'They are betrothed?' she said, interrogatively, fixing her eyes enquiringly on his countenance.

He replied in the affirmative.

'And she is very beautiful,' she repeated, in the same manner.

'As beautiful as you have represented her, Mademoiselle—even more so, since

the look of life and the changing expression of the original, cannot be transferred to canvas by any degree of art.

CHAPTER VI.

Walter's report of Miss Le Brun, after his first visit, had so influenced the curiosity of Bob Harrison, that he had resolved to make her acquaintance, if possible, and so he had requested Lieutenant Foster to introduce him. This Charley refused to do, because he knew that his acquaintance was not desired by the lady, and because he judged from the knowledge he had of Lieut. Harrison's character and habits, that he was quite capable of insulting unprotected virtue, especially if it wore a form so enticing as that of the fair Italian.

This refusal had greatly exasperated Lieut. Harrison, and he had tried hard to make it the occasion of a quarrel between himself and Lieut. Foster. But Charley had resolutely persisted in preserving his usual good humor, until one day, several weeks after, he received a letter from Nellie in which she spoke of his intimacy with Mademoiselle Le Brun. 'Do not think me unreasonably jealous,' she wrote, 'but I hear so much of her beauty and accomplishments, and of your devotion to her, that I cannot help feeling uneasy. I can readily imagine that in your isolated condition, any female society must be agreeable, but I can scarcely think that mere admiration and friendship could suggest all the attentions you are said to bestow upon this pretty foreigner. I have not a very high opinion of my own personal charms, and I can readily believe that her's far exceed them; and though my heart is faithful to its first love, and I can but hope that yours is also, yet if it should be otherwise—if you should ever think your boyhood's love a delusion, and should ever find one whose mind and heart more fully meet the wants of your manhood's nature than she to whom your earliest vows were plighted, remember, that moment you are free.'

True in every thought, word and deed to Nellie, and having no memory of the past, no hope for the future, unconnected with her, it wounded Charley deeply to have her entertain the slightest doubt of his fidelity. And all the indignation he was capable of feeling was excited against the meddling mischief-maker, whose slanderous misrepresentations were insidiously undermining Nellie's happiness and his own. He knew this person to be no other than Bob Harrison, and his long-suffering, patience with that unworthy individual gave way completely under this new wrong. He resolved to call him to account for it, and to make him understand plainly that henceforth there must be an alteration in his conduct. In this frame of mind he was summoned to dinner.

There were dining with the mess that day several visitors, a military friend of Capt. Williams, and a legal and medical gentleman from Luray, and they were having 'a time of it.' The wine was circulating pretty freely, and Bob Harrison, about half-egg over, was even more noisy and disgusting than usual. Most of the company were gentlemen, and the toasts drank were such as might have been expected of such. But Harrison, possessed by his evil genius, with unparalleled audacity, proposed a toast to Mademoiselle Le Brun in language so coarse and obscene as to form the grossest insult that could be offered to the name of any lady, at the same time winking at Charley most significantly.

'Retract that instantly, and apologize to me, as the lady's friend, for having taken such a liberty with her name, or I will run my sword through you,' said Lieut. Foster, springing up and confronting Harrison.

A CHICKAHOMINY STORY.

With the eyes of the company upon him, and the stimulant of the wine within him, Harrison refused to retract.

'Then liar, poltroon, slanderer, and meddler, take that,' said Charley slapping him in the face.

Lieut. Harrison was furious. He would take an insult from no living man. Foster should answer for it with his life. If he recognized the 'code of honor,' he would not deny him the satisfaction due a gentleman.

Lieut. Foster replied that he was ready and willing to accommodate him in any manner. He could be found at his quarters at all times.

The challenge was sent, and accepted by Foster, and time, place and weapons agreed upon.

Bob Harrison chose the Doctor from Luray, a boon companion of his, for his second, and Charley selected Walter Maynard. The seconds were to meet the next morning for the arrangement of some preliminaries.

At an early hour the next day, business for the garrison called Lieut. Foster away from the fort, and he did not return until the middle of the afternoon. On his return, he did not go to his own quarters, but entered Lieut. Maynard's, with a view to learning the result of the interview between him and Dr. Smith. But finding Walter asleep, or apparently asleep, he did not disturb him; and intending to call in again in a few hours, he laid off his sword and pistol on a table under the open window, and set off for Luray to settle some little bills he owed there, in preparation for the approaching duel.

But Walter was not asleep, though he was trying to quiet his conscience by the temporary oblivion of sleep. He knew that Bob Harrison's wrath had subsided, and that the simplest interference on his part would induce the poor cowardly fellow to apologize to Lieut. Foster, and on the other hand, that Charley, who had never remained angry twenty-four hours in his life, would be satisfied with an apology from Harrison, and with the fright he had given him. The laws of honor forbade that a proposition for an amicable adjustment should emanate immediately from the principals, but such a suggestion might be made with propriety by the seconds; and Dr. Smith had delicately hinted, during the interview of the morning, that such an adjustment was possible; but Walter had pretended not to understand his drift, and had gone on with the arrangements for the meeting. This duel was the very thing he most desired. If Charley should be killed, he thought there would be no obstacle to his suit with Miss Gardiner; and if, on the other hand, Lieut. Harrison should fall by the hand of his cousin's betrothed, he thought that Nellie would never marry one whom she must regard as the murderer of her relative; while, if neither should fall, the circumstance of their having met in mortal combat would so incense Nellie's family against her lover, that he believed the opposition to their union would be greater than she would dare incur.

In the meantime, the affair of the contemplated duel had spread through the garrison, and had excited a great deal of interest among the men. Lieut. Harrison was universally detested by them, while Lieut. Foster was almost idolized, and there was but one wish expressed as to the issue. 'But,' said one of a group of men gathered in front of the barracks discussing the affair at the time when Lieut. Maynard was trying to forget it in his sleep, 'suppose Lieut. Harrison should kill Lieut. Foster, what a shame and what a pity it would be.' They all agreed that for such a noble man to fall by the hands of such a scoundrel would be a lamentable affair. 'He,' alluding to Lieut. Harrison, 'has gone to Luray now,' said one of the men, 'to get drunk, and come back here cursing and striking with his sword the first man who comes in his way, like he always does.'

It would be a fine thing if he should fall in the river on his way back, and get drowned before he has a chance at the life of Lieut. Foster.

Victor Le Brun, who, in spite of his many faults and follies, still entertained an ardent affection and a profound respect for his noble sister, and who, therefore, must have been strongly interested in the duel between his officers, was standing near during this conversation, but he spoke not a word on the subject. Indeed, it had been observed, that since he had been informed of the difficulty between Lieutenants Foster and Harrison, and its occasion, he had been silent and moody. But there was a fierce look in his cold black eyes, and at this remark of his comrade, a dangerous fire flashed from them in a keen look of sudden intelligence, exultation and determination. However, he said nothing, except to mutter an oath, as he fell into line with a squad of men which the corporal was forming to go and relieve guard. In addition to the line of sentinels maintained around the outside of the fort, there was also an inner line kept up around the officers' quarters for the purpose of keeping order among the men; and Le Brun's post for the next hour was near Lieut. Maynard's window, through which he could see all over the apartment.

For some time after Charley had left the room, Walter had tossed about restlessly upon his hard, narrow camp bed, vainly courting 'nature's sweet restorer,' which is romantically supposed to come readily only at the wooing of the innocent. At length he fell into a dreamy, dozing state, half sleeping, half waking, which was disturbed by many unpleasant dreams of falling over a precipice, &c., and of having a gun aimed at his head; and starting up, he could have almost sworn that on opening his eyes he had seen a hand grasping a pistol vanish through the window. Shaking off the lethargy which oppressed him, and approaching the window, he looked out; but there was no one near except private Le Brun, who was leisurely walking his post, and who, of course, would not have permitted any one to approach the window. Finding his waking thoughts but little more pleasant than his dreams, he took up a book and tried to read; and becoming interested in its contents, he read until sunset, his usual hour for a walk.

Conducting from Fort Alexander to Luray, and performing in its curvings a semi-circle about five miles in extent, was a fine military road; and branching off from this road, at a distance of a quarter of a mile from the fort, was a narrow foot-path, leading through ravines and over precipices impassable except to pedestrians, by a much nearer route to the village. Passing out of the fort, Walter proceeded along this road for a mile or more; then retracing his steps to where the foot-path came into the road, he seated himself on a fragment of rock in the shadow of a large boulder on the side of the path next to the fort, and awaited the return of Lieut. Foster, who, he had learned, from a message left with his servant, was gone to Luray. It was almost dark when he saw a man approaching from the direction of the village, and presuming it to be Charley, he arose, and was about to accost him, when perceiving him, the man sprang into the bushes and ran off in the direction of the road leading to Luray. Supposing him to be one of the men from the garrison who had eluded the sentinels and gone down to the village without leave of absence, and who, of course, was anxious to avoid detection, the circumstance did not, at the time, impress him as at all singular or suspicious.

When he had waited twenty or thirty minutes longer, he was joined by Charley, who asked him how long it had been since Lieut. Harrison passed, and whether they had had any conversation about the meeting of the next morning.

Walter replied that he had seen nothing of Lieut. Harrison since dinner, and that he had supposed him to be in his quarters at the fort.

'That is strange,' replied Charley; 'I met Dr. Smith about half a mile outside of the village, just now, and he told me he had just parted with him in the path leading to the fort. And not wishing to have the pleasure of his company on the way back, I detained the Doctor in conversation sometime, purposely that he might have a long start of me. He could not have been very far ahead, for I heard the report of his pistol while I was talking with Smith, who wondered what Harrison could find in the woods to shoot at that hour of the evening—certainly he has not shot himself.'

'Not very probable,' said Lieut. Maynard. 'He has doubtless reached the fort by another route, that which leads along the river bank, for instance.'

'Dr. Smith tells me,' observed Charley, after a short silence, 'that you and he have fixed upon to-morrow afternoon, at sunset, for the meeting between Lieut. Harrison and myself, and that pistols have been selected as the weapons. This suits me very well; I have a new pair which I have never used, and I will give them to you in the morning that you may test them.'

* * * * *

That night Lieut. Foster occupied himself in writing letters to his parents and Nellie, to be delivered to them by Walter in the event of his falling in the approaching duel. His anger against his adversary had nearly cooled, though he still felt that he had been sorely wronged by him; and he thought that a regard for the honor and fair fame of a lady so worthy, so unfortunate, and so unprotected as Mademoiselle Le Brun, was a sufficient excuse for his course toward Bob Harrison; still, he did not feel very comfortable in the thought of being slain by such a contemptible antagonist. Nor did he like the thought of imbruing his hands in the blood of a fellow-man; and before seeking his couch, for the last time, perhaps, he magnanimously resolved to discharge his pistol in the air. In his letter to Nellie, he gave her a detailed account of his whole acquaintance with Miss Le Bruh, and, as he thought, entirely exculpated himself from the charge of inconstancy. He also explained, as fully as was practicable, the origin and progress between him and her cousin, and acquainted her with his determination not to take his life in the coming encounter.

Up to a late hour the next day, Lieut. Harrison had not made his appearance at the fort, but Charley and Walter thought that he must have passed the former in the woods on the evening before, and gone back to Luray to spend the night with his friend, Dr. Smith, until that gentleman arrived in search of him. The circumstance of his non-appearance was certainly a very singular one, and very embarrassing to his second, on whom the task of producing him in time for the meeting of the afternoon devolved.

In the meantime, Lieut. Foster, his second, and the surgeon of the garrison, at the appointed hour, repaired to the duelling ground, a large wood about two miles from the fort, in an opposite direction from Luray.

When they had been there nearly an hour, Dr. Smith arrived without Lieut. Harrison, and warm, weary and perplexed with his fruitless search for him. He had sent out scouts in all directions, he said, and had himself searched all of Harrison's haunts in Luray, but without being able to discover any trace of him. Nobody at the fort or in the village had seen anything of him since he parted with him on his way to Fort Alexander on the preceding evening; and he was inclined to think this a most mysterious and alarming circumstance. Walter and Charley, who thought they ought to know Bob Harrison pretty well, thought it not impossible that he had chosen this method to avoid the dangerous encounter with Lieut. Foster, and the latter felt somewhat amused at the Doctor's uneasiness, but of course they did not express their opinion.

On their return to the fort at dark, they found that Captain Williams fully shared the anxiety and apprehensions of Dr. Smith, and seemed disposed to attach considerable importance to the circumstance of the latter's having heard the report of a pistol soon after parting with his friend. He thought it quite possible that Lieut. Harrison might have been killed by the accidental discharge of his own pistol, and not altogether improbable. At all events, he had determined to organize a party on the next day to search the woods and ravines between Luray and the fort, and ascertain to his satisfaction if there had been foul play.

Accordingly, at an early hour the next morning, Capt. Williams' party set out from the fort in search of traces of Lieut. Harrison, while at the same time another party, headed by Dr. Smith, started from Luray upon the same errand. Neither party had made any discovery of anything the least suspicious until the latter reached the small river over which the path to Luray led, at a distance of less than a mile from the village, and about one and a half from the fort. Over this river, which was at that point about twenty yards wide, was a narrow foot-bridge, spanning it from cliff to cliff, at a considerable height above the bosom of the stream; and near the end of this bridge, on the side next to Fort Alexander, some small dark spots, very much resembling blood, were observed. The removal of some loose earth, which appeared to have been recently spunked in that vicinity, disclosed another similar spot larger than a man's hand; and a part of the hand-railing on one side of the bridge had been recently broken, as if by the fall of a heavy body against it. A horrible suspicion seized upon the minds of Lieut. Harrison's friends that he had been waylaid and foully murdered here, and his body thrown into the stream. Indeed, the spot was most favorable to such a purpose. Being remote, wild and gloomy; and the concurrence of circumstances leading to such a conclusion was truly very strange.

They were not, however, left long in conjecture; for, on dragging the river, just below the bridge on the side next the broken railing, the body of the missing man was recovered from the water. An examination discovered the fact that he had been shot through the heart, and the circumstance of his pistol being found, loaded in every barrel, buckled up in the cases or sheaths attached to the belt around his waist, proved, as well as the nature of the wound itself, that he could not have shot himself, either by accident or design. But who was the murderer of Lieut. Harrison?

While the men who discovered the body were drawing it to the shore, another party, who had a small boat just above them, discovered, lodged in a tuft of ferns and lichens growing on a small point of rock which projected from the bed of the river, a pistol, the barrel of which had been discharged, and the ball of which exactly corresponded to the orifice of the wound.

A further examination of this weapon discovered the initials of Lieut. Foster engraved in small German characters upon the silver plate on the handle, and there was no difficulty in proving it to be the weapon of Charley Foster.

The body of Lieut. Harrison was carried to Luray, and a jury summoned to hold an inquest over it. After a careful examination of all the facts presented, the jury rendered a verdict that Lieut. Harrison had come to his death by the hand of some person not clearly proven, but supposed, from strong circumstantial evidence, to be Lieut. Foster. Lieut. Foster was accordingly arrested and committed to prison to await his trial, which, as the term for the sitting of the court in Luray was very near, would come off in a few weeks.

The surprise universally created by this circumstance was only equalled by the regret occasioned. "Impossible!" was the unanimous verdict—impossible that Lieut. Foster, so frank, so brave, so generous and humane should have committed an act so uncharacteristic and cowardly. Yet the fact of his having had a quarrel with the deceased, and his having been seen to take the same route, only a short distance behind him, on the very evening of the murder, connected with the discovery and identification of the pistol, formed a terrible chain of circumstantial evidence against the accused.

As to the fact of his having pursued the same path that Lieut. Harrison was murdered on, only a short distance behind him, Lieut. Foster was prepared to prove by Dr. Smith, the intimate friend of the murdered man, that he remained with him in conversation long enough for Lieut. Harrison to have reached the fort, and that while they were conversing, they heard the report of a pistol in his direction, and spoke of the circumstance at the time. Moreover, Dr. Smith would testify that if his friend had been shot on the bridge between the time when Lieut. Foster had left him and that at which he joined Lieut. Maynard, he must have heard the report of the pistol on his way to Luray, whereas, he heard nothing of the kind. From this evidence, therefore, it would appear that the fatal shot was fired while Foster was talking with the doctor, at the distance of a quarter of a mile from the bridge.

But the affair of the pistol was not so easily cleared up, and no one was more surprised than Lieut. Foster at the circumstance. He had left his sword and pistols in Lieut. Maynard's room before setting off for Luray, and had not seen them since, having ordered his servant the next morning to get and put them away; and he believed both to be in his table drawer when the one found in the river was shown him. The servant, on being questioned, said that he had only found one of the pistols on Lieut. Maynard's table, and had supposed that his master had the other. Lieut. Foster could not prove that he had left both there, for Maynard, though not asleep, as his friend had supposed, did not really know that the pistols had been left on his table, although he remembered seeing the sword there. And the half-waking dream of seeing a hand grasping a pistol retreating through the window was so unreal, that he could not, for the life of him, tell whether it had been a dream or reality, therefore, he said nothing about it. But he remembered very distinctly having seen a man proceeding from the direction where Lieut. Harrison's body was found on the evening of the murder; and being a rigid disciplinarian, he had, on returning to the fort, instituted inquiries, and found all the men present except Le Brun, who was absent without leave. He did not speak to anyone of this circumstance, but watched the Italian narrowly.

In the meantime, Captain Williams had telegraphed to Lieut. Harrison's father the news of his son's death, and he had come on to the fort and removed the remains to Virginia for interment.

Charley had also telegraphed to his father, who proceeded to Luray immediately, employed the best counsel to be had, and by giving heavy bail, procured his son's release from prison.

When the day for the trial arrived, the Court House at Luray was crowded to its utmost capacity; and among the sea of anxious faces which met the gaze the calmest was, undoubtedly, that of the accused. Assured by his counsel that the evidence against him would be mere cob-web in his hands, and above all, sustained by the consciousness of his perfect innocence, he entertained no fears for the result of the trial; though he deeply regretted the death of Lieutenant Harrison, and the unfortunate chain of circumstances which had implicated him in that sad affair.

While the countenance of the accused was the most serene in all that vast crowd, the two faces which discovered the least serenity and betrayed the strongest internal conflict, were those of Lieut. Maynard and private Le Brun; the latter of whom had been the real author of the murder, which he committed partly from motives of private revenge, and partly to prevent the possibility of injury to Lieut. Foster in the projected duel. The former was deliberately withholding testimony which would certainly clear the best friend he had ever had from the dark charges brought against him, and the want of which might lead to his conviction. It is, however, but justice to say, that Maynard did not intend to permit Foster to be hung, if his testimony would prevent it. He thought Dr. Smith's testimony would be sufficient to clear him; and if it should not, he intended to accuse Le Brun, stating, concisely, all the facts—of his having seen him standing for an hour, opposite the window where Lieut. Foster's pistols had been left; the impression he had during that time of having seen a hand grasping a pistol.

withdrawn quickly from the window; the circumstance of his seeing a man approaching from the direction of the bridge who avoided him; and the further circumstance of Le Brun's having been at that particular time absent from the fort without leave, together with the suspicious manner in which the Italian had deported himself since the murder. He however thought, as we have remarked, that Dr. Smith's evidence would be sufficient to clear Lieutenant Foster before a *legal tribunal*; but he preferred that enough suspicion should attach itself to the character of the accused to prejudice him in the eyes of Miss Gardiner, her family, and the world. He therefore remained silent, meanwhile closely watching Le Brun.

On the other hand, Le Brun was in an agony of anxiety between regard for his own safety and that of his esteemed officer, whom he loved with all the ardor of his passionate nature. The report of Lieut. Harrison's insult to his sister, and of the manner in which Lieut. Foster had resented it, had filled his soul with gratitude towards the latter and revenge towards the former; and the conversation between his comrades, which we have repeated, had suggested to him the means of gratifying his revenge and at the same time showing his gratitude. Finding himself, a few moments later, opposite Lieut. Maynard's window, where a pair of pistols, which he supposed to belong to that gentleman, were lying, and seeing that Walter was asleep, he had, as he thought, unobserved, stolen one of them, and secreted it upon his person. He knew that Lieut. Harrison was absent in Luray, and he thought that Lieut. Foster had not returned from his expedition of the morning; so, as soon as he was relieved from his post he stole out from the fort, eluding the sentinels as he frequently did, and took the path in the direction of Luray. Secreting himself in the bushes on the river bank, he shot Lieut. Harrison as he was coming over the bridge. He then rolled the body off the bridge, and threw the pistol, as he thought, into the water. Then hurriedly sprinkling some loose earth over the few spots of blood on the bridge, he hastily retraced his steps towards the fort.

The unlooked for turn which affairs had taken had greatly surprised and perplexed him. He had resolved, rather than see Lieut. Foster suffer for his crime, to confess his guilt. Hence it was that he hung with such breathless anxiety upon the lawyer's words as they argued the case.

The counsel for the defence dwelt strongly upon the excellent character of the accused, his honor, frankness, generosity and humanity, the mildness of his temper, and the kindness of his disposition, which had made him proverbial throughout the garrison and the village, and quoted the numerous instances, well known to many, in which he had patiently and good-naturedly overlooked the rudeness of the deceased. He also endeavored to show the absence of sufficient motive for the commission of such a deed. Having proven Lieut. Foster to be brave and honorable, was it not much more probable that he would have availed himself of the opportunity presented him in the contemplated duel of honorably and bravely obtaining satisfaction from Lieut. Harrison, than to have basely waylaid and murdered him? If the latter had refused to grant him satisfaction, the circumstance of his assaulting him privately would not seem so strange; but as all of the arrangements for their meeting had been completed, he regarded such a thing in the highest degree improbable. But the strongest point in the defence was the evidence of Dr. Smith. When the weapon which killed Lieut. Harrison was discharged, Lieut. Foster was talking with that gentleman, and had remained with him some time afterwards. When they had parted, Dr. Smith had consulted his watch to see whether he would be in time for an appointment he had in the village that evening; and when Lieut. Foster had joined Lieut. Maynard at the other end of the wood, the latter, growing impatient, was just consulting his watch, holding it up in the moonlight; and the intervening period between the time reported by these gentlemen on the witness-stand, was barely sufficient for a rapid walk over the space between them. If, therefore, Lieut. Foster, during that walk, had shot Lieut. Harrison on the bridge, Dr. Smith, from his close proximity, must have heard the report of the pistol, whereas he emphat-

really declared that he had heard nothing of the kind. As for the circumstance of Lieut. Foster's pistol having been used, he thought that might be easily explained. According to the testimony of Lieut. Maynard and of Mike Mahony, the servant of Lieut. Foster, the arms of the latter had remained for some hours under an open window, before which the men were frequently passing; and as, by Lieutenant Maynard's testimony, he had been asleep during this time, nothing was more probable than that this pistol had been stolen. Lieut. Harrison, it was well known, was extremely unpopular with his men, and it was very natural to suppose that some of them had taken this method, the only one open to them, of settling an old grudge.

At this point, Lieut. Maynard looked towards Le Brun, and saw that his face was livid with terror and guilt.

'Or,' said the counsel, 'why not suppose that Lieut. Maynard had shot Lieut. Harrison with his friend's pistol? He had the opportunity of doing so; for when the fatal shot was fired he was in the wood, as he himself admitted, and alone. On the contrary, Lieut. Foster was at that time with Dr. Smith.'

At this suggestion Walter winced slightly, in spite of himself, and glancing up nervously, caught the eye of Le Brun fixed upon him in malignant joy. He returned the look with one which caused the Italian, cowed and subdued, to turn his face in another direction.

Having addressed himself in a clear, strong argument to the minds of the jury, the counsel next appealed most eloquently to their hearts. He spoke in a most touching manner of his client's youth, talents, fine character and fair promise; of the hopes of his aged parents centred in this only son, and of his country's claims upon his strong arm and clear head to uphold her rights and defend her honor when occasion required, and asked if this bright promise, all these fond hopes and reasonable expectations, should be sacrificed to a mere suspicion. Many eyes unused to weep grew moist under the pathetic appeal of the eloquent speaker. After listening attentively to the counsel on the other side, the jury retired, and, after a short absence, returned with their verdict. A breathless silence pervaded the assembly. Le Brun, in breathless eagerness, hung forward, and Walter felt his heart stand still within him.

'Prisoner,' said the clerk, 'stand up! look upon the foreman. Gentlemen of the jury—what say you, is he guilty of the offence with which he stands charged, or not?'

'NOT GUILTY,' said the foreman, in a loud, emphatic tone. The words had barely escaped his lips when a deafening shout of joy arose from the large number of spectators present.

Le Brun deserted the fort that night, and this circumstance at once caused him to be suspected of Lieut. Harrison's murder, though he was never arrested and brought to trial.

Before his trial, Charley had written at great length to Nellie; but he received no reply until after his acquittal. She was nearly heart-broken that he should be charged with murder. Believing him to be innocent, she had resolved, if he should be condemned to death, that she would go to him and give her hand to him in marriage, regardless of the objections of her mother, that she might thus have the privilege of soothing his last hours. But although she and Bernard refused to believe him guilty of the crime charged to him, her mother and uncle could not be persuaded of his innocence, and were accordingly violently incensed against him. Mrs. Gardiner was almost frantic at the idea of her daughter's maintaining a matrimonial engagement with her cousin's murderer, and commanded her, on the penalty of incurring her everlasting displeasure, to break the engagement at once. She represented that not only Nellie, but her whole family would be forever disgraced by her marriage with a person whose character was under such an imputation, and she taunted her with breaking her heart over a man who had been willing to risk his life for another woman. Such is the weakness of human nature, that this last argument did not fail to tell upon her resolution. If she had seen him condemned to suffer innocently an ignominious death, and to be cut off in the prime

of life from all its hopes and joys, she would have linked her fate with his, in spite of every agency which might have opposed, so strong was her womanly love and sympathy. But when she knew that he was safe from the danger which had threatened him, she suffered her mother's counsel and influence to prevail. The letter in which she informed him of her decision was kind, though very chaste and rather cool. She assured him that she believed him to be as innocent as herself of her cousin's murder, but that circumstances of recent occurrence had so increased her mother's opposition to their union, that she dared not incur it further. In conclusion, she wished him much happiness and success in life, and hinted at Miss Le Brun's ability to heal any wound she might inflict.

This letter greatly shocked and grieved Charles Foster. For some moments after reading it he sat like one stunned, then holding it in the flame of the lamp beside him, until it was quite consumed, he said to Walter, who was with him: "It is all over between Nellie and myself now; the coast is clear for you Walter, or for anyone else, I suppose."

This announcement, which Walter had so longed to hear, filled him with a wicked joy; but when weeks went by and he observed the cruel change which it had wrought in his noble and once joyous and bright-hearted friend, he could not help feeling sometimes the keenest pangs of remorse.

It was a great relief to him, therefore, when Lieut. Foster, finding Fort Alexander, with its sad associations, a most unpleasant abode, obtained a transfer to a fort on the Texas frontier.

Before leaving, Charley called on Mademoiselle Le Brun, for the first time since Lieut. Harrison's death, to bid her good-bye. He found her much distressed at her brother's disappearance, and learning that she desired to obtain a situation in a school in some Southern city, advised her to go to Richmond, and offered to escort her and her aunt to that place. The offer was accepted, and the three set out immediately for Virginia. Arriving in Richmond, Lieut. Foster was not long in obtaining a very lucrative situation in one of the most fashionable schools in the city.

About six months after the departure of young Foster from the fort, Lieut. Maynard obtained a furlough for the purpose of visiting Virginia. While in that State much of his time was spent at Mrs. Gardiner's, in Nellie's society, and one evening he availed himself of the opportunity and made that young lady an offer of marriage, which was declined very politely, but so positively as to leave him no ray of hope.

CHAPTER VII.

The harvests of Arretium

This year old men shall reap;

This year young boys in Umbro

Shall plunge the struggling sheep.

And in the vats of Luna,

This year the must shall foam

Round the white feet of laughing girls,

Whose sires have marched to Rome.

Two years, fruitful, as are even the smallest cycles of time, in changes both to nations and individuals, had passed since the events recorded in the last chapter, and their flight brings us to a period destined ever to be remembered as among the most memorable in American history. As Vesuvius, before casting out upon Herculaneum and Pompeii, the vast mass of seething matter which for years had been burning and fusing within its



"Then holding it in the flame of the lamp," &c.

subterranean fires, had given frequent warnings of the great catastrophe by premonitory rumblings and quakings, so the great structure of the American government had frequently been rocked to its centre by the antagonistic forces combined without it, before the smothered fires of sectional animosity, party bitterness and fanatical hate, burst forth in all their fury, blasting and blighting a land which nature had made so fair. Upon the ears of many the mutterings of the coming storm had fallen almost unheeded, until the lightning-flashes from the port-holes of Sumter, and the thunder of the cannon there announced that the tempest of war had burst full upon us. But now the tocsin sounded throughout the South, calling upon the patriots of '61 to arise and drive back the hordes of ruthless and barbaric hirelings, who threatened to overflow the country with one vast lava tide of desolation and destruction; and nobly did they respond. The very earth seemed to shake beneath the tramp of gathering hosts—

"The horsemen and the footmen
Are pouring in amain
From many a stately market place,
From many a fruitful plain:
From many a lonely hamlet,
Which, hid by beech and pine,
Like an eagle's nest, hangs on a crest
Of purple Appennine."

And while all over the South, the husbandman was leaving his fields, the mechanic his shop, the merchant his counting room, the lawyer his office, and often even the clergyman the sacred desk, to buckle on the warrior's armor, where were the two young disciples of Mars, whose adventures we have recorded in the preceding chapters?

Immediately on the election of Abraham Lincoln to the Presidency of the United States, Lieut. Foster had resigned his commission; and as soon as the Confederate Government had been fairly organized at Montgomery, he had tendered his services to that government. They were accepted, and he had been early appointed to active duty, with the rank of Major.

As long as the United States Government had been administered by *statesmen*, according to the Constitution framed by our Revolutionary Fathers, with an equal regard for the rights and interests of all sections of the country, Lieut. Foster, like the whole people of his native State, had rendered to it the most thorough and unequivocal loyalty of his soul. But when he beheld the sceptre, in consequence of a long course of political chicanery and corruption, grasped by a set of *fanatical demagogues*, who declared that noble Constitution 'a covenant with death and an agreement with hell,' and who were pledged to use the whole power and resources of the country to rob and oppress a large and important part of it, he immediately renounced his allegiance to so base and degenerated a power, and grasped his sword with a determination to lay it down only when death should relax his grasp, or when he should see the rights of the South fully vindicated, her wrongs avenged, and her independence forever secured from Northern tyranny and usurpation.

Cold, calculating and egotistical, Lieut. Maynard was incapable of cherishing a sentiment so generous and unselfish as patriotism. And possessing no property in Virginia, and entertaining but little regard for his relations there, he had, since giving up all hope of marrying Nellie Gardiner, ceased to feel any particular interest in the affairs of his mother State. He was, as he had said to his brother officers, a soldier of fortune, with nothing to lose and everything to gain, and would follow any flag which might lead to wealth and fame. He was, also, as a matter of course, unable to realize what heavy sacrifices noble and generous natures were capable of making in the cause of patriotism, and equally unable to conjecture what powerful results such sacrifices were capable of effecting; consequently he saw for the comparatively feeble South, only failure and ruin in the fearful contest upon which she was entering. While for the North, glorying in its

superior numbers, multiplied resources, and its regular army and navy, he predicted the most rapid and brilliant success; and, in imagination, pictured himself rising rapidly to rank in the victorious army, to a high, perhaps the chief command.

These visions were rather rudely shaken by the collision of the 'Grand Army' with the 'Rebels' on the fatal plains of Manassas, July 21st, 1861. As he tried, in vain, to rally the shattered remains of his regiment, which had lost both its Colonel and Lieutenant-Colonel in the bloody conflict, and found himself borne along irresistibly with the struggling, terrified mass of citizens and soldiers who fled for their lives from the field of expected triumph and real disaster, Major Maynard grew frantic with mortification and rage. Standing erect in his stirrups, he cursed the flying host, and endeavored foolishly to arrest their course by cutting among them with his sword; but a teamster, who had thrown out his load of 'notions' designed for the trip to Richmond, to take back a load of defeated and discomfited Zouaves to Washington, rushed unceremoniously past, striking the haunches of the major's horse so violently as to cause him to throw his rider directly into the struggling mass of men and animals. Before he could recover himself, several of the fugitives had run over him, and he came near being caught in the wheel of a caisson. His saddle had scarcely been emptied when a Dutchman and an Irishman seized his horse, and mounting it, one behind the other, were proceeding through the crowd with a speed which did great credit to their horsemanship, and effectually crushed Major Maynard's hopes of a rescue. Lamed and bruised by his fall; hatless, hungry and weary, he limped back through all that fearful rout to Washington, 'a wiser, if not a better man.'

Major Foster's regiment was also on the field at Manassas; but being on the extreme right of the Confederate army, was not engaged during the day.

On his way to Manassas, he paid a hurried visit to his parents, and had found his father in very feeble health. The shock of arms at Manassas had scarcely died away, when Major Foster was summoned to his father's death-bed.

During this last visit home he had twice seen Nellie Gardiner at church, but not a word had passed between them. Though the bright, rosy hue had, in a measure, faded from her cheeks, yet Nellie Gardiner was still beautiful and queenly. Once only, while in church, their eyes had met, and in that second each read in the countenance of the other that the past was not forgotten—the fire had not burned out—the slightest breath would fan the smouldering embers into a flame.

* * * * *

Bernard Gardiner was a gallant officer in Stuart's Cavalry, and had been in the dashing charge made by Radford on the retreating Yankees at Manassas. He had escaped unhurt then, and through several skirmishes subsequent to the battle; but within a few weeks after, was seized with the typhoid fever, which was then so prevalent and fatal in our army. He appeared to be very ill at first, and being unable to perform duty, a furlough had been granted him to go home and remain until he should recover. On his way to Richmond he grew suddenly worse, and when he arrived was perfectly delirious. Among a number of sick soldiers, and with no friend or acquaintance, he was sent off to a hospital, and had been there more than a week before his family knew of his illness. Then, having learned through a letter from his captain that he had gone to Richmond sick, they made inquiries and found that he had been sent to the Hospital of St. Francis de Sales. And most fortunate it was for him that he had been sent there; for, but for the kind and skillful nursing he received at the hands of the Sisters of Charity, he would have died before his friends could have reached him. When Mrs. Gardiner and Nellie, apprised of his whereabouts, arrived at the hospital, they found him so extremely ill, as to render his recovery doubtful. For weeks his mother and sister watched beside him, assisted by the kind sister whom they had found at his bed-side. Under their tender nursing, the invalid began slowly to rally, and finally gave promise of returning health.

It was, however, several weeks before he could be removed from the hospital. During all this time Nellie was with him; and was often led to admire the patience and devotion of the noble women around her, engaged in their laudable and noble work. Especially did her heart warm with gratitude and admiration to the one who had been Bernard's nurse in his illness. This lady—Sister Theresa, as she was called by the sisterhood—was, indeed, a most lovely and interesting woman. In spite of her coarse and unbecoming attire, and although her form was languid and thin from her arduous labors as a nurse, and her eye dim and her cheek pale with her constant vigils, yet she was beautiful. The gentleness of her touch and the softness of her voice, united to her beauty and grace, made her a great favorite with the invalids, and her ministrations were eagerly sought after. Nellie frequently remonstrated with her for overtaking her strength, and begged her to be more careful of her health. To such remonstrances she would invariably respond—

'Ah! lady, it matters not how soon I may be spent in my Master's service. All whom I loved, or, at least, all who loved me have passed away from this earth; and I, too, am gone with the pleasures as well as the cares of life; only its duties are left to me. And I love to minister to the wants and relieve the distress of these suffering patriots. My brother was a soldier, and the best friend I ever had is an officer in the Southern army; perhaps I may yet be permitted to save the lives of one, or both of them.'

At length the young man became strong enough to be carried home, and bidding farewell to the good sister, lost sight of her for awhile.

Several weeks after Bernard had been taken to Fairfield, Nellie visited Richmond, taking with her some wine, milk, &c., for the patients at the Hospital of St. Francis de Sales, and some fruit and flowers for Sister Theresa. On her arrival at the hospital, she was informed by the attendant sisters, that Sister Theresa had not been there for more than a week, but was lying very ill at the Asylum. Feeling, as we have said, a strong interest in Bernard's gentle nurse, she resolved to call on her there. Through the influence of Sister Agnes, whom she had frequently seen at the hospital, Nellie was admitted to the apartment of Sister Theresa, whom she found alarmingly ill. She was lying on a small, narrow bed, in a lethargic slumber, her cheeks and lips scarlet with fever, and her beautiful features pinched and haggard from the ravages of disease. Learning that no hopes were entertained of her recovery, that she had expressed a desire to see her before losing consciousness, and had frequently spoken of her in her delirium, Nellie begged to be allowed to remain at the Asylum and assist in nursing her. Her request was granted, and having dismissed the carriage, she returned to Sister Theresa's room and took her post by the bed-side of the sufferer, thus relieving the weary sister who had been watching over her.

Being left alone with the sleeping sufferer, her attention was naturally attracted to the pictures suspended against the wall. She had understood that Sister Theresa was an adept in the art of painting, and supposed those which adorned her apartment were from her own pencil. The one on which her eyes fell first, was a picture of the 'Last Supper,' with the Disciples gathered around their Master, Judas Iscariot dipping the sop, and John leaning on Jesus' bosom. It was really a fine painting, being an interesting subject and well executed; but what most attracted and interested her in it was the fact that the face of the beloved Disciple was an exact copy of Charles Foster's. True, the expression was rather more soft and seraphic, but the features were identically the same. The likeness was too striking to be accidental, and the affair puzzled Nellie greatly. But the mystery grew deeper when, on approaching the picture which hung more in the shade, she discovered it to be a Madonna which, had the face been copied from her own, could not have resembled her more strongly. Amazed and mystified, she knew not how to explain the strange coincidence. On a little table, by the window, was a handsome portfolio of sketches and engravings, and written on the inside of this portfolio, in a handwriting which she immediately recognized as Major Foster's, she read: 'Mademoiselle Theresa Le Brûlé, Luray, July, 18—.'

The dying woman, Sister Theresa, was then no other than the beautiful and accomplished Mlle Le Brun, whose rivalry of herself had been represented as so formidable and so successful. From what she had seen of her charms, even in the plain, homely dress of her order, she knew that they had been very powerful; but reason told her that they had never succeeded in winning Charley Foster's heart one moment from its allegiance—else why had he failed to use the opportunity her rejection had offered for his espousing the Italian girl? and why had the latter entered upon a conventual life, if there was any hope for her of a destiny in the world so happy as to be the wife of Major Foster? That she loved him, there could be no doubt, Nellie thought: else why should she, who had professed to renounce every earthly hope and affection, have given his features to the Apostle that she might have them always before her. Sister Theresa's conversation and manners too, so melancholy and sad, had impressed her on their first acquaintance with the belief that she had been disappointed in love. Out of this suspicion her imagination had woven quite a little romance before her visit to the Asylum; and now the whole story was revealed to her. But how had the sister become acquainted with her face as pictured in the Madonna? She knew that this elaborate painting could not have been executed since they met at Bernard's bed-side, for since that period, up to her illness, Sister Theresa had been constantly engaged in her noble work of nursing the sick and wounded Confederate soldiers. She was driven then to the conclusion that Charley had employed the fair artist to copy her daguerreotype; and her mental soliloquy was, 'O, how I have wronged him in doubting his fidelity! At the very time when I was taught to believe that he was forgetting me in the society of this accomplished woman, he was employing her talents to perpetuate my unworthy image. I deserve to suffer for ever having suspected one so noble and so true; and suffer I must while I live. When this poor girl found her love to be hopeless, she could retire within the sanctuary of her church, and hide her wounded heart under the robe of a recluse; but my church offers no such asylum; and I am condemned to mingle with the gay, thoughtless daughters of mirth, and adopt their manners and simulate their joys, when my heart is breaking.' Overcome by her emotion, she sat down by the bed-side of Sister Theresa and wept bitterly.

That night Nellie was watching alone with the suffering sister, having prevailed on Sister Agnes, whose turn it was to watch, to bring her bed and lie down on the floor, when Sister Theresa roused from her deep slumber and asked for water. Nellie gave her water, and when she had taken that, she presented a cup of wine whey to her lips, and observed, with pleasure, that she drank it eagerly. After drinking this she seemed much revived, and shortly thereafter was quite conscious, and inquired the hour. Nellie consulted her watch, and replied that it was midnight. The sick woman recognized her voice, and, grasping her hand, thanked her for visiting her, and inquired how long she had been with her.

'I am glad you have come,' she said in a feeble tone, fixing her languid eyes on Nellie's face. 'I have but a short time to live, and in my dying hour I have a confession to make to you.' Pointing to the picture of the 'Last Supper,' she inquired in a feeble voice: 'Have you examined that picture?'

Nellie responded in the affirmative.

'You have recognized Major Foster's features,' she said, glancing through the dim light towards the picture at the side of her bed, 'and doubtless you have wondered to see them there. And it was wrong in me, who have given up the world, to retain any trace of the wicked idolatry which, in spite of fasts and penances, long divided my heart with the holy things which should have possessed it exclusively. But O, lady, you who know him and who loved him once, can pardon my weakness. He was so kind, so generous, and so noble, that I could not help loving him, although I knew from the first that he loved another. For he made no effort to conceal his love for you, and employed me to paint your portrait from a daguerreotype which he always wore in a locket next to his heart. I thought, as he delighted to think, that you loved him also; and I made

no effort to win his love from you, partly because I thought it would be impossible, and partly because I thought it would be wrong. Yet you could never have loved him as I did, if you were capable of believing him guilty of the crime with which he was charged, or even, if believing him guilty, you could renounce him. Your rejection cost him dearly; he has never been himself since. When I found that you had cast him off, I would have won him if I could; but I could not. And seeing that this was impossible, I determined, on my aunt's death, to enter this asylum, that in its seclusion and the right performance of my religious duties, I might forget a love which had rendered me so unhappy. He loves you still, and oh! promise me, that when the confession I have to make is received, you will believe him guiltless, as he is, and make him happy with your love.

'I am the Mademoiselle Le Brun, of whom Lieutenant Foster spoke to you in his letters from Fort Alexander; and I had a brother, Victor Le Brun, who was a private in the garrison at that place while Lieutenant Foster was there. But on the very day after the trial of Lieutenant Foster, for the murder of Lieutenant Harrison, he deserted from the fort, and I never heard from him afterwards, until about ten days before my illness, when he was brought to the St. Francis de Sales Hospital, from the — Louisiana regiment, ill with the fever. Notwithstanding his miserable condition and changed appearance, I recognized him immediately, and devoted my whole time and attention to him, vainly hoping to be able to save his life; but God had decreed otherwise—he died in a few days after reaching the hospital. During his illness, he had frequent lucid intervals, and during one of these he confessed to me that he murdered Lieutenant Harrison. His had, indeed, been a wild and wicked life; but he died repentant and hopeful of forgiveness through the atoning blood of our Saviour. And although he has gone where neither public opinion nor the penalty of the law can reach him, I would not expose his crime, only that I think it is due to Major Foster to do so.'

During the latter part of this communication, Sister Theresa had spoken with great difficulty, and at its close she began to sink so suddenly that Nellie, alarmed, roused up Sister Agnes. The priest was summoned to administer the rites of the church, and the sisters gathered around the couch of their dying companion to watch with tearful eyes her last moments. In a few minutes, the beautiful and unfortunate Theresa Le Brun was no more. She sank to sleep as sweetly as a babe.

CHAPTER VIII.

For many months after the battle of Manassas, while the 'Grand Yankee Army of the Potomac,' under the 'Little Napoleon,' was being re-organized, greatly augmented, drilled and equipped for one short and brilliant campaign, in which Richmond was to be taken and the 'rebellion crushed,' Walter Maynard remained in glorious inactivity in his camp near Washington. The disastrous result of his first encounter with his wronged and outraged countrymen had greatly disappointed his expectations, and suggested the probability of his having staked his all on the losing side; however, he thought it was now too late to rectify his error, if error he had committed. After exhibiting the courage and dash which he was acknowledged to have shown at Manassas, while so many around him were giving evidence of cowardice and incapacity, he thought that he might expect rapid promotion in the Federal army, especially as it was being so largely increased. But, greatly to his disappointment and disgust, he beheld blatant demagogues, entirely ignorant of military affairs, appointed to high positions in the army, while many men, who had made military science their study for years, were doomed to occupy inferior offices. While political generals were springing up around him like mushrooms, he was slowly advanced to the rank of colonel. Dissatisfied with this circumstance, strongly opposed to the political tenets of those around him, and heartily disgusted with the

came to him and those morals of many of his companions in arms, he began to find his own a most embarrassing, and, to say the least, unpleasant one.

In this condition of affairs, at the opening of the second campaign, when the scene was shifted from the Potomac to the Chickahominy, he found himself once more among the scenes of his childhood. His regiment was in the advance corps of McClellan's army, and as he rode slowly forward at the head of his men, each familiar spot upon which his eyes rested recalled memories and awoke associations which stirred his soul to its very depths. Base renegade as he was, he could not witness, without emotion, the desolation and devastation which the depredations of the invading army were inflicting upon the land of his birth, which had once been so dear to him. The greater portion of the white inhabitants had fled from their homes, which had been speedily stripped of every thing portable by the hithering troops; but he frequently met with negroes he had known, who, having been seduced from their masters, were following the Yankee army in the capacity of cooks and hostlers. The bold impudence and reckless, restless bearing of these, as contrasted with their former composed, contented demeanor and cheerful politeness, impressed him very painfully.

Not a week or more after the arrival of the Yankee army in Hanover, Col. Maynard's regiment was kept on picket duty in the front; but at the end of that time it was relieved and sent to the rear. Thus having much leisure, and finding the time hang heavy on his hands, he took occasion to visit those places within the Federal lines with which he had been most familiar. The first place he visited was Fairfield, which he had passed on leading his regiment to their first position on the Chickahominy, near Mechanicsville. At the first news of the evacuation of Yorktown by the Confederates, Mrs. Gardiner had removed her servants from Fairfield to a farm she owned in a portion of the State not liable to invasion, and had gone with her daughter to her brother's on the Pamunkey River. From the first occupation of the adjoining county by the Yankees, her house had been used by them as a hospital. When Maynard visited the plantation, the destruction of fences, crops, and out-buildings had been complete; and it presented a scene of naked desolation which he found hard to recognize as the pleasant, happy homestead of former times. After wandering aimlessly through the rooms in which he had spent so many happy hours, he went out into the garden and stood once more before the honey-suckle arbor, as he had stood there four years before; but how different the scene that now met his view! The vines, laden with clusters of blossoms which perfumed the surrounding atmosphere, clambered over the arbor in the same rich luxuriance, and with the same cheerful beauty in this fresh May air that they had worn in the golden autumn light of that memorable afternoon; but instead of the two fair, graceful young figures they had then shaded, he beheld half a dozen dirty Dutchmen, the relief-guard, seated around a little table in the arbor, playing cards, with pipes in their mouths and a bottle of liquor near them. Instead of the softly-breathed words of love he had then overheard, his ears were now assailed by a volley of coarse oaths, uttered in broken English or low Dutch, and enforced by rude, menacing gestures. In disgust, he turned away, and pursued his journey to the old Washington Henry Academy.

The road to this place led past Pole Green church, the place of worship which he had attended while a pupil at the academy. Reaching the church, an irresistible impulse caused him to dismount and enter. The place had been a picket-stand for cavalry, and the turf in the yard was trampled and littered by the horses; the doors had been torn from the hinges, and many of the window shutters broken up and consumed by fire-wood; the gilt clasp had been wrenched from the Bible, and the font, blackened by smoke, was lying in the yard near a heap of ashes, where it had evidently been used for culinary purposes; and, worse than all, the walls of the sacred building were defaced by vulgar caricatures and obscene inscriptions. Col. Maynard advanced to the pew which he used to occupy when a boy, and, seating himself there, found a momentary pleasure in permitting his mind again to wander back to the scenes of his happy boyhood days. In spite of the sad changes around him, the power of association

was so strong as to recall scenes and faces, many of which he had long since forgotten, and some of which he had vainly tried to forget. He seemed to see Charley Foster's bright, frank, boyish face beside him, as it had been in the happy olden time. When he thought that they were soon to meet in deadly conflict, a shudder ran through his frame. In the soft sighing of the breeze through the forest, he seemed to hear the rustle of Nellie Gardiner's dress as she walked down the aisle, and the flutter of her bonnet-ribbons in the sweet spring air, as he had often heard them in happier days—with what a thrill of delight. The hymns they used to sing there, he and Charley looking over the same book, and the very words he had often heard from the pulpit, came back to him from the shadowy past. One sermon which had deeply impressed him at the time, and the text of which was—'Be sure your sins will find you out,' recurred to his memory with such force that, to divert the painful train of thought it excited, he arose and left the church.

Arriving at the academy, he also had many changes there to note; for although the Federal camps had not been sufficiently convenient for the Northern vandals to injure it much, yet time, the great destroyer, had left his impress there. For several years before the war the school had been broken up, and since its close the academy buildings had been let by the trustees to a succession of tenants, each of whom had contributed much to despoil and nothing to improve the place. It was now occupied by a soldier's family; and when he asked the sad, troubled woman who met him, to furnish him with a snack and permit him to rest in her house while it was preparing, she replied that she could only supply him with a very indifferent one, as she was very poor, her husband being in the Confederate army and their five children being dependent on her labor for subsistence. The Yankee soldiers, too, had stolen all of her fowls, destroyed her garden, and driven off her only milch cow to their camps.

Maynard replied that, under these circumstances, he should be sorry to trouble her farther, except to beg the loan of a cup or glass, that he might get some water from the spring. She offered to have the water brought for him, but he declined the offer, and walked off in the direction of the spring, without even inquiring the way, much to the woman's surprise, who was sure she had not seen him there before.

The spring had been a favorite haunt of his and Charley's, and was really a very beautiful and romantic spot. Just above the place where the cool, crystal stream gushed out of the bank, stood a large beech-tree, the smooth bark of which had been sadly excoriated by the mischievous penknives of various ambitious ones among the academy pupils, who had taken this method of handing down their names to posterity. When he and Charley, before going to West Point, had paid their farewell visit to the academy, they had visited the spring, and the latter had laughingly proposed that they should each carve his own and his sweetheart's name on the opposite sides of the tree. This had been agreed to, and when the work was finished, each had read under the name of the other the initials 'N. G.' There was no rivalry between them then; the boyish love of that period had not been strong enough for jealousy, and they had only joked each other a little, good-humoredly, on the coincidence. To-day Walter slowly and tediously cut away with his congress knife, all of the tough bark over which his boyish work had spread in the expansion of the tree, thinking, as he did so, that if it were left, future generations might scornfully point it out as the name of a traitor and renegade. He wished no record, or remembrance of himself left here; for he felt that his life had been a failure, and he knew that he must now be despised by those whose good opinion he had once desired to gain. He had tried earnestly, but vainly, to forget everything but the present, and, indeed, he desired, at times, to forget even that.

At the end of an hour spent at the spring he returned to the house; and the good woman observed that when he returned the glass, with many thanks for the use of it, his eyes looked red as if he had been weeping. He remained in conversation with her some time, making many inquiries about the families around the academy. He also asked for a description of her cow, which he set down on his tablets, and promised, if

possible, to restore it to her. On leaving, Maynard slipped a gold dollar into the hand of each of the five white-headed children who had stood clinging to their mother, with their thumbs in their mouths during the whole conversation.

Sure enough, greatly to the joy and surprise of the poor woman, her cow returned in a day or two; and the Colonel's Irish servant who drove it, brought also a large bag of soldier's stores, as a present, from his master. As may be supposed, Walter's singular conduct on this occasion, made a strong impression, and the soldier's wife has not yet ceased to astonish and entertain her friends with a description of the kind and polite Yankee officer who restored her cow—the only gentleman, she solemnly avers, that she saw in the whole Federal army.

For several days after his visit to the academy, Col. Maynard remained in his tent, maddly and silent; then, remembering that by a secret movement of a part of McClellan's forces, Poplar Lodge was now in the Yankee lines, he concluded to visit his aunts, inquire into their condition, and assist them as far as might be possible. But on his arrival there, he found the place deserted. The Yankee camp covered a part of the farm, and the soldiers, as usual, had destroyed everything destructible about the premises. An artillery company had encamped in the yard, which had been stripped of its enclosure, and trampled to powder by the horses which had been tethered to the trees. The doors and weather-boarding had been stripped from the house, and bits of charred mahogany scattered around, showed what had been the fate of the old-fashioned furniture which Miss Judith and Miss Emeline had been wont to keep so brightly polished. The kitchen and Uncle Thomas' house were as naked and empty as the dwelling, and Walter had just concluded that the family must all have moved away before the advance of the Federals, when, on passing a cedar hedge, which skirted the hill some distance below the house, he heard a deep groan which seemed to issue from the very bowels of the earth, and to wind through a subterranean labyrinth on its passage to the upper air. Pausing to listen, he heard a voice, which he recognized as Uncle Thomas', uttering the following prayer:

O, Lord, deliver us! Good Lord, save us. O, Lord, arise in our defence. Drive back these Philistines that have come up against us—these worse than Egyptians, that rob and despoil us. Let loose upon them the thunder-bolts of Thy wrath. Grind them under the chariot-wheels of Thy justice. Scatter them as chaff before the wind.—Strike them as Thou didst the hosts of Sennacherib. Overthrow them both horse and rider into the Red Sea of thy destruction.

And Thou, O Lord, who seest the little sparrows when they fall upon the ground, and hearest the young ravens when they cry to Thee, take knowledge of Thy unworthy servant Thomas. Suffer him not to perish, but give him this day his daily bread. Thou who didst send the ravens to feed Elijah in the wilderness, succor poor Thomas. O Lord, have mercy.

The plaintive, *sing song* tone in which this remarkable petition was uttered, interspersed with indescribable groans, would have been truly ludicrous if it had not been so genuinely pathetic. Moreover, Walter knew that Uncle Thomas, unlike most old negroes, though possessing many staunch virtues, made but little pretension to piety; and he felt sure that only in the greatest distress would he be driven to his knees with this fervent, if not very orthodox, invocation of the Almighty. His unique prayer, while exhibiting a considerable knowledge of Bible history, betrayed such an ignorance of the true gospel spirit, as has been of late glaringly displayed by many who make much greater pretensions and have enjoyed many more opportunities than Uncle Thomas. So thought Col. Maynard, who, as a matter of curiosity, had sometimes listened to the blood and thunder political harangues which disgrace so many Northern pulpits. But he did not take time to moralize much, for anxious to learn the condition and whereabouts of his aunts, he crept through an opening in the hedge, and accosted the old negro.

At the sound of his voice, Uncle Thomas rolled up his eyes, threw up his hands, and uttered another long, deep groan.

'How are you, Uncle Thomas?' repeated Walter.

'Miserable! miserable! ruined!' groaned the old man. 'Thousands would not repair the damage; and we haven't got a cent. Times was so hard that we could hardly live before; and now we are bound to starve. Thousands wouldn't replace what we've lost; every living thing eaten up; every green thing devoured by these blue-legged locusts; the house pulled all to pieces; the fences all burnt; the horse stolen; the very furniture that used to stand in your grandfather's drawing-room taken for firewood. God knows I tried to save something; but they cursed me, called me a 'Rebel nigger,' and threatened to stick their bayonets in me. I asked 'em was that the way for gemmen to behave; and they cursed me again, and asked me what did I know 'bout gemmen. I told them I had been raised with gemmen, and by gemmen that wouldn't a had a Yankee to black thar boots; and at that, one that they called the corporal, knocked me down. Here is the place he struck, you can see it now,' said Uncle Thomas, pointing to his forehead, where a large contusion was visible.

'Well, what else could you expect, if you were impertinent to them?' asked Col. Maynard.

'Lay Mars Walter, you can't sarse them people; they ain't no better'n niggers, nor so good, in my opinion. All that will turn 'ginst thar masters and go with them, and lie and steal for them, it's 'hail fellow, well met,' they are gemmen; but them that stays with their masters and mistresses that has raised 'em, are infernal niggers! Why, at the very time they was stealing and destroying everything here, they had Smith's John, the grandest rogue and liar in the county of Hanaracco, with 'em, welkin' arm in arm, and wastlin' and tusslin' with him; and he was aggin' 'em on, tellin' them that I guided the 'Rebels' 'bout here, and fed thar pickets. A grand rascal; he owed me a grudge for catchin' him stealin' Miss Judith's turkeys last winter, and carryin' him before the magistrate. He got thirty-nine lashes then, and I wish it had bin thirty-nine hundred.'

'Well,' said Walter, 'how much of John's information was true.'

'Why, you see,' said Uncle Thomas, scratching his head, 'when these Yankees was advancin' forward here, and our people advancin' back before 'em, Mars Bernard Gardner and some of his men stood picket near the Lodge gate a day and night, and as they didn't have but mighty little to eat, I cooked up some eggs and chickens and bread, and carried it to them. And one day, when Mars Charley Foster and some cavalry come by here reconnoitering, I just told 'em whar ten Yankees was standing picket, and they surrounded 'em and caught 'em. But John didn't know nothing 'bout this; 'twas a secret between me an' them, and he just told what he did for a lie.'

'But my aunts,' said Walter, 'where are they? and have they saved nothing?'

'They went to Richmond, thank the Lord, and carried all of the servants but me, and the plate and family portraits, and their clothes, and the beds and table linen. I was left here, by my own request, to take care of the things—a miserable old fool that I was. Why, I might as well a been dropped in James river and told to keep my feet dry. They've made a clean sweep of it. My axe and frying pan and a little bag of meal was the last things left, and yesterday when I put on a hoe-cake to bake and went to look for some blackberries to eat with it for my dinner—for you know, Mars Walter, I never was used to eating dry bread—they come and stole them—hoe-cake and all—and mighty weak.'

'I will see that you do not suffer,' said Walter, 'but you spoke just now of having seen Charley Foster. Was he well? And what is his rank in the Southern army?'

'He is a Colonel,' was the reply, 'and when I saw him riding at the head of his regiment, looking so grand and so handsome, that time I drove the ladies over to see the review, you can't think, Mars Walter, how I wished you had been there too.'

'Well, I am a Colonel as it is,' observed Walter, 'and if you will go over to the camp

of my division when we have our next review. I will engage to show you a much finer spectacle than the Southern army can afford; for our men are splendidly equipped, while the Confederates, I hear, are both dirty and ragged.

'Well, that may be,' said Uncle Thomas, shaking his head, 'but fine feathers don't make fine birds. I know one thing, our men was all around Poplar Lodge for more than a week, and not so much as a chicken was stolen, while these Yankees hadn't been here three days before they had everything—even down to my axe and frying pan and little bag of meal, as I was telling you.'

'Never mind,' replied Colonel Maynard, 'I will repair your losses, as far as I can. But how were my aunts when you saw them last? And what have they been interesting themselves in since I was in Virginia. Do they ever speak of me?'

'Ah! that they do,' said Thomas sadly; 'and I can assure you, sir, that your course, in taking sides with the Yankees, and turning your sword against Old Virginny, as Miss Judith says, has grieved them mightily. Your conduct has caused them to be mistrusted and doubted, and brought disgrace upon them. Miss Emeline says that when it was first known about here, that you had gone with the Yankees, the A's, and B's, and C's, all old friends of the family, would scarcely speak to her at church. But since it is known how distressed and angry they are at your course, people begin to pity them and notice them a great deal. Miss Judith says it nearly breaks her heart that a Maynard should be a traitor to his country. And when Mrs. Harrison, and Mrs. Gardiner, and Miss Nellie were dining here last summer, they were talking about you, and called you a Benedict Arnold, a Judas Iscariot, a renegade, and all sorts of names.'

'Well, you need not repeat any more of their compliments,' said Walter; 'I could thank them to confine their attention to their own affairs, and let mine alone. But pray, is Miss Nellie Gardiner still unmarried? and where is she at this time?'

'She is at her uncle Harrison's,' replied Uncle Thomas, 'and is not married; and I heard her tell Miss Emeline last summer, when she was joking her about a General somebody from the South, that she never meant to be.'

Arriving again at camp, a passport was obtained, and Uncle Thomas sent beyond the Yankee lines;

As soon as Walter had heard that Miss Gardner was in their lines, and therefore, as he thought, accessible to him, a fierce and unconquerable desire to see her took possession of his soul. And having occasion to visit the White House a few days afterwards, he determined to make a *detour* by Mr. Harrison's, pay his respects to the ladies there, and offer to assist them as far as he could, while the Federal army might be round them.

When he was approaching the house he saw about a dozen stragglers from the Yankee army in the yard and garden, shooting the chickens, gathering the strawberries, and committing all sorts of depredations. A servant had just been to them with a message, which was received with shouts of coarse laughter; and on her return, a head, which he recognized as Nellie's, was put out of an upper window, and in a voice of gentle entreaty she begged that they would leave a few of the strawberries for a sick lady who could eat nothing else, adding that there were very few ripe, and that they had not yet had a dish for the family.

'Ha! ha! ha!' laughed the Yankees, cramming in the strawberries with both hands; 'we ain't had none yit.' Then one of the worst looking of the set cried out that she had better mind how she showed her d—d pretty face, or they would leave the strawberries, and come after her.

Galloping up to the garden, Col. Maynard drew his pistol on the stragglers, and ordered them to disperse. They hastened to obey, and scampered in all directions. When he had seen the last one leave the premises, he entered the house and sent up his card to Miss Gardiner. In a few minutes it was returned, with the following words written in pencil on the reverse:

'Miss Gardiner acknowledges and desires no acquaintance with the enemies of her country.'

Mortified beyond expression, and wounded to the quick, Col. Maynard remounted his horse and galloped back to camp.

The next day Col. Maynard's regiment was again ordered to the front; and during the grand series of battles and skirmishes which filled up the next few weeks, beginning with the battle of Hanover Court House, and culminating in the seven days' fighting around Richmond, he was kept so actively engaged as to have but little time for the terrible thoughts which haunted him whenever his mind and body were at rest.

CHAPTER IX.

It was the 27th June, 1862; and before the Confederate capital two powerful armies were drawn up, prepared for the fearful conflict which was to decide the fate of that much coveted city. During several hours of the preceding afternoon, portions of the two armies had been hotly engaged on McClellan's extreme right, near Mechanicsville; and the Federals had been driven from their position there. Stonewall Jackson, the hero of many victories, was leading his invincible little army, flushed with the glory of the Valley campaign, by rapid marches to the assistance of their over-matched comrades before Richmond. Indeed, on the morning the 27th, they had already penetrated the Yankee lines, and in the vicinity of Pole Green Church, were preparing, by a short rest, to be hurled like an avalanche upon the enemy. But the Federal army, in vastly superior numbers, armed with the most improved weapons, equipped and supplied with a thoroughness and elaborateness rarely excelled, and occupying well chosen positions of great natural strength, opposed a most formidable front to the Confederate forces.

In this condition of affairs, nothing could be more doubtful than the issue of the approaching battle; and only the All-seeing God could tell what were the emotions of the inhabitants of Richmond and the surrounding country, as they awaited, in breathless suspense, the end of an engagement which was to result in their deliverance from an insulting, tyrannical, and unprincipled foe, or to condemn them, for an indefinite period, to the presence and rule of a despotic, marauding, and bitterly despised enemy.

Only He, who is love, and who has fashioned the human heart with its warm, deep affections and passions, to whose omniscient eye all things, from the least to the greatest, are plain, knows with what throbs of agony the mothers, sisters and wives of the brave Southerners listened to the reverberations of the cannon and small arms which were hurling missiles of destruction at the breasts of those who were near and dear to them. Weak, pale, trembling in the seclusion of their homes and the privacy of their closets, they could only weep and pray; yet through those fearful hours they wrestled with the Ruler of the Universe in such an agony of fervent supplication as could not fail of good results; and the God of battles fought that day with the Confederate army.

At an early hour of the morning, when the struggle was but just commencing, Col. Foster's regiment, which was in the van of the attacking army, was ordered to support a battery of artillery, which was planted on the crest of a hill just in the rear of his mother's house, at Beaver Dam. The Chickahominy, as is well known, had for several weeks formed the line at this point between the two armies; and Beaver Dam had, therefore, been in the Yankee lines, and had been visited with the destruction and desolation that that elegant, civilized, and humane people are so fond of inflicting. Colonel Foster had observed the desolation of his home and the destruction of his property with marked composure; but when he reached the graveyard, where his father was buried, situated on the hill where the Confederate artillery was being placed in position, and saw with what sacrilege his parent's grave had been visited by the Yankee barbarians, his heart swelled with strong emotion. The wooden railing around the grave had been

consumed for fire wood, and the marble slabs on which were inscribed the name and epitaph, had been used as a hearth—probably during a wet season—was cracked from one end to the other by heat. The contemplation of this outrage excited in him the strongest indignation. With a kindling eye and a look of high resolve, he repeated, almost unconsciously, those fine lines from Marco Bozzaris:

"Strike! till the last armed foe expires,
Strike! for your altars and your fires;
Strike! for the green graves of your sires;
God and your native land."

And in his heart he devoted himself with redoubled ardor and devotion to the task of delivering his native land from the presence of the lawless vandals.

When the battery he was ordered to support opened upon the enemy, he observed that the pieces were not very accurately aimed; and after making some suggestions to the artillery officer in command, he took out his eye glass and carefully scanned the position of the enemy. Since he and Walter had played and hunted along the Beaver Dam, the woods had all been cleared from the sides of the hills starting the creek at this point, and the mill-dam had been drained, Ellyson's mill being now worked by the current of the stream. Across a meadow, or morass, through which the Beaver Dam Creek flowed, on a range of lofty hills, the Yankees were posted behind strong earth-works, and Col. Foster saw that the task of dislodging them must be a bloody one.

Being familiar with the ground, he was able to calculate exactly the distance of the enemy, and the attitude of their position, and he devoted his attention to the working of the guns by which he was stationed, and for more than an hour stood beside his father's grave directing the fire of the artillery.

In the meantime Col. Maynard's regiment was posted in the rifle pits above the mill, immediately opposite to the hill upon which Chadley was stationed, and under the deadly fire of Confederate artillery commanded and mostly aimed by Col. Foster. A more miserable and a more reckless man than Walter Maynard, one more indifferent to the issue of the battle and of his own personal safety, did not exist among the two vast hosts contending there in deadly conflict. Those green hills and that bright summer morning recalled memories and awoke associations which wrung his heart with agony. While he stood there clothed in the Yankee uniform, and exposing his life in the Federal cause, he would have gladly sacrificed fortune and fame to stand by Charley Foster's side among that noble band of self-sacrificing Southern patriots, whose valor and heroism challenged his respect and excited his highest admiration. Thus, while the deadly missiles were flying around him, he scarcely needed them; for conscience, lately aroused, was lashing him with a whip of scorpions for his treachery to his friend and to his country. For some time past he had been oppressed with a fearful presentiment of approaching death; and while he felt life to be a burden, his soul recoiled in horror from the thought of standing in judgment before a just and righteous God. Torn by conflicting emotions, and scarcely conscious of what he was doing, he exposed himself foolishly and unnecessarily to the Confederate fire; and before the conflict had lasted an hour he was mortally wounded by the fragment of a shell, and borne to the rear, in an imperishable position. As soon as the surgeon had examined his wound and pronounced it mortal, he was placed in an ambulance and sent to the hospital at Fairfield. The house there being already uncomfortably full of the wounded from the fight at Mechanicsville the evening before, he was placed by his servant and the ambulance driver in a little office on the edge of the yard.

In the meantime, the battle raged fiercely at Ellyson's mill. Several times the Confederates attempted to carry the heights by direct assault; but through the treacherous maneuvers, and under the murderous fire from the enemy's works, this was found impracticable; they were finally gained by a flank movement; not however until many a brave soldier had there made libation of his life's blood.

Driven from Mechanicsville and Ellyson's mill, the Federal troops fell back some six or eight miles to a strong position near Gaines' Mill, where with concentrated forces, they prepared to make formidable resistance to the advance of the victorious Confederates.

Col. Foster's regiment had suffered considerably at Ellyson's mill, but he himself had escaped unhurt.

The old county roads had been made impassable by the Yankee artillery and wagon trains during the wet weather which prevailed for some weeks after their first occupation of the country; and in following up the retreating enemy, the Confederates were obliged to proceed along a fine new military road lately constructed by them. This road led immediately along the yard at Fairfield, and right under the window of the house in which Col. Maynard was lying wounded; and when the Southern army passed, many an eye was directed to where the mangled body of the dying renegade lay.

Seeing so many eyes turned in that direction, Col. Foster rode up to the window and looked in. To his surprise he recognized, in the ghastly face and bloody form before him, his former friend and late enemy, Walter Maynard. Calling to the surgeon of his regiment to follow him, he dismounted and entered the house.

Approaching the cot, he took hold of the cold, bloody hand of his friend of better days, and gently uttered his name.

But there was no sign of recognition or consciousness in the still, pale face of the sufferer. When the surgeon had examined his wounds, he assured Col. Foster that they were mortal; he would scarcely survive twenty-four hours.

"Poor Walter," said Charley, wiping off a tear which had gathered in his eye. "I would like to have him call my name and clasp my hand once more as in the good old days when we were boys. Do you think that he will return to consciousness again before he dies?"

The surgeon replied that it was highly probable, as the brain was not affected by the wound, except from the shock which the whole system had received from the tremendous force of the missile.

Finding that Col. Maynard's servant had forsaken him, Col. Foster left his own man with him, with directions to make him as comfortable as possible, and hurried on to join his regiment, which a few hours later was in the hottest of the action at Gaines' mill. Here, after a desperate struggle, the Confederate arms were again successful.

It was night, and the battle was over. The cannon which had been thundering so fiercely all day, now rested, grim and silent, upon the field of death; and the muskets, whose ceaseless rattle had for so many hours filled the air with their deafening roar, now lay scattered, as powerless as the hands that had wielded them, upon the bloody ground, or were stacked where the weary troops had bivouacked after their fearful work of carnage. As the summer moon, pale and calm, looked down upon the white faces, the bloody forms, and the glazed eyes which had looked their last, scattered through the forests, along the hill-sides, and over the plains of that hotly-contested field, no sound disturbed the stillness of night, save the groans and cries of the wounded and dying. Where so lately thousands had rushed along in the impetuous charge, there was now no sign of life, save the few gray, dusky figures that glided about in the moonlight, looking for missing comrades, or bearing them, when found alive, to an ambulance or wagon, that they might be taken to the field hospitals.

The battle had been fought and won by the Confederates, who had thus gained the key to McClellan's position, cut him off from his base of supplies, and driven his right wing in upon his left, leaving him no alternative but to surrender unconditionally or retreat as rapidly as possible to the James. There was yet much hard fighting before the Southern patriots in following up the still powerful and formidable foe; but the battle of Gaines' mill had decided the fate of the capital, and Richmond was safe.

With a gallantry unsurpassed by that of any other officer on the field, Colonel Foster

fought unscathed through the whole battle, until its close, when in pursuit of the flying enemy he had his left arm fractured by a minie ball. The fracture, though not sufficient to require amputation, was severe, and the surgeon, on binding up the wound, charged him to keep very quiet for several weeks, and repeated the charge when he had seen him seated in the ambulance which was to take him to Richmond. On reaching Fairfield, and finding Walter still alive, he determined, although he knew it would be imprudent to do so, to stop there and remain with him while he lived.

On entering the room he found Maynard asleep, but the servant who was with him informed his master that he had been awake and entirely sensible during the whole afternoon; that he knew where he was, had spoken of his wound, and had listened with great interest to the progress of the battle; and that that evening when the firing had ceased, he bade him ask a courier who was passing, which side had whipped. Being told that the Confederates were victorious, he raised his eyes to heaven and said 'Thank God.'

The whispering around the couch of the wounded man, who was only dozing uneasily, aroused him, and he asked for water.

Colonel Foster had a little flask of brandy with him, and pouring some into a cup, held it to Walter's lips, who drank it eagerly without seeming to notice by whom it was proffered; but when he had swallowed it he looked up, and, recognizing Col. Foster, grasped his hand and said tremulously, while tears sprang to his eyes, 'Charley, is it you?'

'Yes, Walter,' said Charley, warmly returning the pressure, 'it is I, can I do anything for you?'

'I don't deserve your kindness,' said Walter; 'I never did, for I always repaid it with ingratitude and treachery; but I will not have another chance to wrong you; I am dying fast. Dying,' he repeated, 'in the land which gave me birth and nurtured me to manhood, that I might in my manhood's strength come against her with a marauding host, to devastate and destroy, to subject her daughters to insult and her sons to bondage—dying,' he groaned, 'alone with the man whose happiness I have treacherously wrecked in return for unnumbered kindnesses. Charley, don't you despise me?'

'No, Walter,' responded Charley, 'I do not; but I do, indeed, pity you.'

'But you do not know the worst,' he replied, 'I know you were always generous and forgiving; but are you a Christian? Can you forgive one who has deliberately and foully wronged you—one who has blighted the dearest hope of your life?'

'I believe I am a Christian,' solemnly replied Charley, 'and that, by the grace of God, I could forgive such an one, especially if he were repentant.'

'Well,' said Walter feebly, 'do you remember Bob Harrison's murder?'

'I have very good reasons to do so,' was the reply.

'Can you pardon me then, when I tell you that when you were being tried for that crime, I had almost positive evidence that it was committed by Le Brun, and yet withheld it for the sake of prejudicing Miss Gardiner and her family against you? Did you think me as base?'

'I did not,' responded Col. Foster frankly; 'but I forgive you, as I hope to be forgiven by my Creator for my manifold transgressions.'

'I sincerely thank you, my dear old friend; but do you think there is a chance of my forgiveness with God?'

'He has said,' repeated Col. Foster devoutly, 'that he that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out; and though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.'

'Then pray for me,' said the dying man, 'for I have never yet learned to pray for myself.'

Kneeling down by the rude pallet, in the solemn moonlight, Charley prayed long, fervently and eloquently for the suffering and penitent man before him.

When he had finished, Walter thanked him, and pointing through the open window to a dark belt of forest bounding a moonlit plain, said: 'Charley, I think I am going to die to-night, and I wish you to have me buried in those woods—not on the edge, but in the very centre of them—so much out of the way, that none will take the trouble to go there and scoff at the grave of the traitor and renegade. And you need not trouble yourself about a coffin; just wrap my blanket about me—many a better man has had no better burial since this accursed war.'

'Whatever you wish shall be done,' said Charley, pressing the cold hand he held in his own.

But Col. Maynard did not die that night, though he grew so much worse, and suffered so intensely, that Col. Foster did not expect him to live until morning. His wounds became so painful that his whole frame was at times convulsed with spasms of agony, while his eyes seemed to start from their sockets, and the foam exuded from his mouth through the firmly set teeth. His mind too wandered, and his delirious ravings betrayed to Charley what had been his state of mind of late. However, about noon the next day he grew easy and composed, and was perfectly conscious, though his feeble pulse and difficult breathing told that his hours were numbered. Charley's wound had, from fatigue, excitement and want of sleep, become very painful; and for several hours he had been suffering intensely with it, but he resolved to remain with Maynard to the last.

When Stuart's cavalry, on the evening of the 27th had made their dash on the White House, a member of Bernard Gardiner's company had gone by Mr. Harrison's and informed his mother and sister that he had been severely wounded in a skirmish some weeks before, and was then lying in a critical condition at a friend's house in Richmond. As soon as they heard this they resolved to go to him as soon as the way might be open, and learning the next morning that the Yankees had been driven across the Chickahominy, they set off for Richmond. The journey was attended with many difficulties, for the road in many places was so cut up by the Yankee wagon trains, as to be almost impassable; when they reached the section of country which had been occupied by the enemy's camps, they found its aspect so changed by the general desolation which prevailed, as to be scarcely recognizable, and it was with difficulty they could find their way among the numerous roads branching off in all directions. In the neighborhood of the battle-field, too, they frequently found the road completely blocked up by the Confederate wagons and ambulances, and by the crowds of slightly wounded who were flocking in the direction of Richmond. About noon they reached Fairfield, and were brought to a stand by a wagon train which halted just ahead of them. The driver had stopped their carriage beside a pump at the end of the small house occupied by Charley and Walter, and was watering his horses, which were much jaded. Around this pump a number of wounded soldiers were standing. Mrs. Gardiner approaching, enquired if a hospital had been established here; one of the soldiers replied in the affirmative. Nellie thereupon proposed that they should send their servant in to see whether any of their friends were among the wounded in the house.

Walter was lying with his eyes closed, and seemed sinking fast; but at the sound of Nellie's voice he raised himself up in a half-sitting posture, and exclaimed, 'I am sure I know that voice. Isn't it Nellie Gardiner's?'

Charley nodded affirmatively.

'Well, then, beg her, for Heaven's sake, to come here instantly; I have some-

thing of importance to say to her; bring her quickly, for I have nearly run my race.

Charley hurried out to the carriage; and after saluting the ladies, said: "Miss Gardiner, Walter Maynard is here dying, and wishes to see you for a moment."

"Col. Maynard, the traitor and renegade," exclaimed Mrs. Gardiner indignantly. Seeing that Nellie hesitated, Col. Foster held out his hand to assist her from the carriage, at the same time saying, "For the love of mercy, grant his request. Miss Gardiner, he is dying an awful death, and is deeply repentant."

Nellie hesitated no longer, and Mrs. Gardiner, for the sake of propriety, followed her.

When Miss Gardiner approached Col. Maynard's side and held out her hand to him, he seized it eagerly and said, "Thank you for coming to me. I know that you must despise me; but I am willing to bear your scorn that I may atone, as far as possible, for the wrong I have done. Charley Foster was as innocent as an unborn babe of your Cousin Robert's murder. Victor Le Brun was the murderer; and I knew it, but would not say so, for I wished you to believe Charley guilty."

He was all this time holding Nellie's hand, and at this point he called Charley to him, and taking his hand placed Nellie's in it. Gazing earnestly at them for some moments, he said, "I separated you once; O, let me have the consolation now of re-uniting you. Renew your troth to him, Nellie; he has always been true to you."

Nellie blushed and was silent for some moments, then raising her eyes she directed a modest glance of inquiry at Col. Foster, who was gazing at her eagerly.

"Do you desire it?" she asked.

"With all my heart," was the eager response.

"Then, sir, I again give you my hand, and with it the same warm affection I have always cherished for you."

Transported beyond measure, Col. Foster knelt at her feet and covered the tiny hand with kisses.

"Thank God," ejaculated Maynard in a hoarse whisper.


The words had scarcely escaped his lips when he was seized with another paroxysm; his body was contorted with agony; the purple nails dug into the white palms of his clenched hands, and his teeth were buried in his pale, bluish lips. But suddenly the contracted muscles relaxed; a few gasps parted the lips of the dying man, and then all was over. He fell back upon the couch a corpse. He had sinned and suffered his last on earth.

When Mrs. Gardiner returned to her carriage, she invited Col. Foster to accompany them to Richmond, as there was no longer anything to detain him at Fairfield. After he had given a few directions to his servant in regard to the burial of Col. Maynard, he accepted her invitation and they proceeded on their way to Richmond.

Seated once more by Nellie's side, he forgot for the moment the scenes of horror and danger through which he had lately passed; he scarcely felt the pain of his wound, which a short time since was so severe; but when he had arrived at his hotel, and was no longer in her charmed presence, he became conscious of a most excruciating pain in his fractured member. His wound indeed proved very severe, and for several weeks the surgeons feared that amputation would be inevitable. He received every attention that friends could bestow, and through their tender nursing, in a few weeks, recovered without the loss of his arm. During his illness, Mrs. Gardiner, who was now reconciled to the idea of his becoming her son-in-law, especially as since the battle of Gaines' mill he had been raised to the rank of brigadier-general, sent every day to enquire after



"At this point he called Charley to him, and taking his hand, placed Nellie's in it," &c.



him; and she and Nellie and Bernard, as soon as the latter was able to ride out, called frequently to see him. In the society of his old friends, Charley was so happy that he scarcely remembered that a cruel and desolating war was raging in the land; and the battles of Cedar Run and second Manassas seemed to him, from the published accounts he read of them, as unreal as dreams. But at the battle of Sharpsburg he was again in the saddle, and at the head of his gallant brigade battled manfully for the land of his birth. And again in December he participated in another battle, that of Fredericksburg, where he received a very slight flesh wound, just severe enough, he thought, to justify him in getting a thirty-days' leave of absence. Indeed, had he not received any wound he would have asked for and obtained a furlough, for Nellie had consented to make him the happiest of men, and December 25th had been selected as the wedding day.

On that Christmas evening there was a quiet wedding at Fairfield; indeed, it would have been almost a solemn wedding if the bride, in her simple robe of muslin and wreaths of orange flowers, and the groom, in his handsome grey uniform, had not looked so superlatively happy. There were but few persons present, and beaux were particularly scarce; for many who would otherwise have graced the scene with their presence, were sleeping their last sleep on the battle-fields of Gaines' Mill, Malvern Hill, Manassas and Sharpsburg; while many more were on this Christmas evening sitting around the camp fire, talking of the happy past, and regaling themselves with the coarse fare of the soldier. So the ladies had to find such amusement as they could in each other's society; for the brave southern boys were paying their homage at another shrine, the same at which Marion of the first revolution paid his—like him they were in love, and their 'sweetheart was liberty.'

Many a sigh was given, in the midst of this mirthful scene, for the absent; and as the sweet notes of merry music arose through the rooms, many among the guests remembered how recently the thunder of battle had rent the air around them, and thought, with a shudder, that under the bright carpets over which they trod so lightly the floors were yet purple with human blood.

Altogether, it was not a very gay wedding; but Charley and Nellie thought that, notwithstanding there were so many of the attending circumstances that might have been improved, it was the very happiest they had ever known.

THE END.