



*Caroline Lee Hentz*

# COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE;

OR, THE

Joys and Sorrows of American Life.

BY

MRS. CAROLINE LEE HENTZ.

AUTHOR OF "ERNEST LINWOOD," "LINDA," "THE PLANTER'S NORTHERN BRIDE," "AUNT PATTY'S SCRAP BAG," ETC., ETC.

"She turn'd—and her mother's gaze brought back  
Each hue of her childhood's faded track.  
Oh! hush the song, and let her tears  
Flow to the dream of her early years!  
Holy and pure are the drops that fall.  
When the young bride goes from her father's hall;  
She goes unto love yet untried and new—  
She parts from love which hath still been true."—*Mrs. Hemans.*

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OR, THE

## JOYS AND SORROWS OF AMERICAN LIFE.

### The Pet Beauty.

MR. HORTON, a rich and childless widower, made his first visit to his also widowed sister, Mrs. Dushane. A beautiful little girl of about ten, was introduced to him as the *darling Clara*, his little pet niece, who was prepared to love her uncle better than any body else in the world, always excepting her mamma. The child was remarkably beautiful, and all the decorations of dress were made to enhance her juvenile loveliness. The heart of the lonely man melted within him when he felt his neck wreathed by those white velvet arms, and his cheek kissed over and over by those sweet ruby lips.

"God bless her!" cried he, hugging her to his breast, again and again. "What a precious child it is!"

"I love you, dear uncle," muttered Clara, in the softest voice—"I have loved you a long time."

Mr. Horton gave the lovely child another warm embrace, then, releasing her, turned to his sister, with moistened eyes.

"If Heaven had granted me such a child as that, sister, to cheer my widowed heart, I should still be one of the happiest of men."

"You must look upon her as if indeed she were your own, my dear brother," said Mrs. Dushane, drawing Clara fondly towards her. "I am not so selfish as to wish to engross her exclusively, though I acknowledge I have a mother's pride as well as affection."

"But you have another daughter, your eldest born—where is she? My heart yearns to embrace them all. I came here to see if its aching void could not be filled."

"Oh! Effie?" said Mrs. Dushane, carelessly. "I do not know where she is. She is very shy and reserved—likes to be by herself—very different from Clara—remarkably ordinary in her person," continued she, in a lower voice, "and has a very singular and sullen disposition. She is a great affliction to me, but one cannot expect to be blessed in all her children."

"Still I want to see the child," said the benevolent Mr. Horton. "I loved her father like my own brother, and he used to say his little girl was the image of himself; I cannot help loving his daughter."

"I fear you will not find much to love in poor Effie," replied the mother, with a deep sigh; "but you shall see her;" then ringing the bell, she ordered a servant to bring Miss Effie to her uncle.

Soon after, a dark, thin, neglected-looking child was ushered into the room, who hung back on the hand of the servant, and whose looks and gestures expressed sullenness and reluctance. Her long, thick, dark hair

hung in tangled masses over her neck and forehead, and it was difficult to distinguish her features, for she endeavoured to cover them with her hair, as with a veil. With slow steps and averted face, she approached the centre of the room, when her mother called to her in a tone of authority—

"Put down your hand from your face, Effie, and come and speak to your uncle—come—quicker."

Effie looked at her uncle through her long tresses, then, letting her hand fall, she drew nearer, with a more willing step.

"Ah! that was her father's glance," exclaimed Mr. Horton, opening his arms as he spoke.

Effie hesitated a moment, then darted like lightning to his bosom, and clung round his neck with both her arms, as if she would never let him go.

"Effie," said her mother, reproachingly, "you are too rude—I did not tell you to tear your uncle to pieces."

"Let her be—let her be," said Mr. Horton, pushing back her hair, and looking earnestly in her face. "Why her eyes are full of tears, and her heart beats as if she had been running a race. Don't be afraid of me—I'm your uncle, who has no little girl of his own to love; I want you to look upon me as a father."

"That will do, Effie," said Mrs. Dushane; "you make your uncle too warm—come and take a seat by me."

Effie withdrew her arms from her uncle's neck, and, sliding from his knee, took the seat indicated by her



mother's glance. Mr. Horton's eyes were still riveted upon her face.

"Is that child sick?" he asked, abruptly.

"No," replied Mrs. Dushane—"she always has that meagre, half-famished look. She is a great deal stronger than Clara."

Mr. Horton did not reply, but looked earnestly at both children, while his sister watched his countenance with silent interest. Mrs. Dushane had anticipated the arrival of her brother with great anxiety. She knew the immense wealth he had acquired—that he had no children of his own to inherit it—that she was his only surviving sister, and she was sure that the moment he beheld her darling Clara, he would adopt her as the heiress of his fortune.

"My dear," said she to her, the morning of her brother's arrival, "you remember how much I have told you of your Uncle Horton—your rich uncle. Now, though we have a very decent living, that is all;—I shall be able to leave you nothing, but your uncle is said to be worth a million—and, I have no doubt, will make you heiress to the whole, if you only try to please him, and be a dear, sweet, beautiful child, the whole time he is here."

"Oh! I will be sure to please him," cried Clara, dancing before the looking-glass. "I'll please him without trying."

"How are you sure of that, darling?" asked the mother.

"Oh, because I am so pretty," replied the spoiled child, shaking back the ringlets from her bright blue

eyes, and looking archly in her mother's face. "You know every body says I am pretty, mamma, and that sister is ugly."

"Yes—but you must not repeat what every body says before your uncle, for he would not be pleased if he thought you vain—and you must be very polite and affectionate to him—get in his lap, put your arms around his neck, and caress him a great deal. You must never get in a passion before him, for it spoils your looks; you know, my dear, you are too apt to do it. You must be very attentive to him when he is speaking, and be sure never to contradict him. I recollect it always displeased him to be interrupted in conversation."

"I hope he will not stay long, if I've got to listen to him all the time," said Clara, "for I know he must be a dry old thing."

"You will not think a million of dollars dry, one of these days," said Mrs. Dushane—"but never mind, perhaps he will leave it to Effie."

"To Effie!" exclaimed Clara, with a laugh of derision. "To Effie! the ugly thing?—Oh, no! I'm not afraid of her. You see if I don't please uncle, without trying very hard either."

A servant, whose chief employment was to wait upon Clara, was full two hours curling her hair and arranging her dress, before the arrival of Mr. Horton, and when the business of the toilette was over, she led her in triumph to her mother, asking her "if Miss Clara did not look like a perfect angel!"

A rapturous kiss on her roseate cheek was an expressive answer in the affirmative.

"Oh! mamma, you tumble my frock," cried the little belle, in a pettish tone. "I don't love to be squeezed."

"Shall I change Miss Effie's dress?" asked the servant as she was leaving the room.

"It's of no consequence," said Mrs. Dushane, coldly: "she needn't come into the room to-night. I'm ashamed my brother should see her," continued she, in a kind of soliloquy; "she is so ugly, and awkward, and wayward, I want to keep her out of his sight as long as possible."

Mr. Horton had not been more than a week with his sister before he discovered that, though she was the nominal head of the establishment, Miss Clara was the real one, and that her varying whims and caprices were the laws that governed the whole household. Effie seldom made her appearance, and then she seemed more like an automaton than any thing else; never displaying any trait of that sensibility which had so touched her uncle's heart the first night of his arrival. When company was present, Clara was summoned to the piano to entertain the guests with music, which she had been taught almost from her cradle; or she was called upon to display her graceful little figure in the mazes of the hornpipe, or the undulations of the shawl dance, which her master said she executed to perfection.

One evening Mr. Horton sat reading in an upper piazza which fronted the chamber he occupied. It

was shaded by luxurious vines, which trailed their flowery tendrils through the diamond trellis-work and excluded the rays of the setting sun. Embowered in the rich shades, he sat unseen, enjoying the sweetness and freshness of declining day. He heard the voices of the children in the adjoining room, and he could not but notice that Clara's tones wanted something of the dulcet softness of her parlour accents. He had scarcely ever heard the full sound of Effie's voice, and he now listened unconsciously to a conversation which promised to develope her character to a most interested auditor.

"Don't, Clara, press so hard against this geranium," said Effie, in an expostulating tone; "you know mother will be very angry if it is broken."

"I don't care," replied Clara, evidently persisting in her conduct; "she will not be angry with me."

"But she will with me," said Effie, "for I have the care of this flower, and if any harm happens to it, she will blame me. You've broken off several leaves already."

There was a moment's silence, and then a sudden and vehement exclamation from Effie again roused the attention of Mr. Horton.

"Oh, Clara, see what you've done! The most beautiful branch is broken—and you did it on purpose too!"

Clara laughed mockingly, and at the same moment Mrs. Dushane was heard to enter the apartment.

"Effie! Effie!" exclaimed she angrily, "what have you been doing? How dare you break that gera-

nium, when I've forbidden you to touch a single leaf of it?"

"I didn't break it, mother!" answered Effie. "I wouldn't have broken it for any thing in the world."

"How dare you deny it, when you are holding it in your own hand, you good-for-nothing little thing?" cried the mother, with increasing anger. "I suppose you want to make me think that Clara broke it—don't you?"

"Clara did break it!" sobbed Effie; "she knows she did, and I tried to keep her from it."

"Oh! mamma, I didn't do any such thing!" cried Clara, with the boldness of innocence itself—"you know I wouldn't."

"I could forgive you for breaking the flower," exclaimed Mrs. Dushane, in the husky voice of suppressed passion, "but tell such another lie on Clara, and you had better never have been born."

Mr. Horton started from his seat in uncontrollable agitation, dropped his book, and rushed to the open door of the apartment just as Effie, smitten by a violent blow, had fallen prostrate to the floor, her hand still grasping the broken geranium, whose leaves were scattered around her.

"Clarinda!" cried Mr. Horton, sternly, "unjust, unnatural woman—what have you done?"

"She is a liar, brother, and I struck her. She deserved it," answered Mrs. Dushane, pale with anger.

"She is not a liar, and I know it," answered he, in a raised voice. "There stands the liar!" pointing to

the now terrified and guilty-looking Clara. "I heard every thing that passed between them. She broke the flower wantonly, purposely, against her sister's prayers she broke it, and then basely denies it. Rise, my poor child," continued he, trying to lift Effie from the ground; "you shall have one friend to protect you, if your own mother casts you from her."

Effie was only stunned by the fall, and when she found herself in the arms of Mr. Horton, she struggled to be released.

"Oh! let me go," cried she, almost frantically—"she will hate me worse than ever. Oh! how I wish I was dead! how I wish I was dead!"

There was something terrible in the expression of the child's large, dilated black eyes, as, in a wild paroxysm of passion, she repeated this fearful ejaculation. Mr. Horton shuddered, but he only held her the more closely.

"Clarinda," said he, solemnly, "you have that to answer for which will weigh like iron upon your soul at the great judgment day. What has this poor, neglected child done, that you treat her worse than an hireling, and lavish all your affection on that selfish and unprincipled girl?"

"Clara," said her mother, "leave the room instantly. This is no place for you. Why do you not obey me?"

Clara began to weep bitterly, but her mother took her by the hand, and leading her to the door, gave her in charge to a servant, with a whispered injunction not intended for her brother's ear.

"Now let *that* child go," said she. "If I am to be arraigned for my conduct, I don't want any listeners. Effie, follow your sister, and mind that there is no more quarrelling."

"She shall not go," cried Mr. Horton. "I fear that there is no safety for her out of my arms. Clarinda, I cannot believe the cruel, unjust, and unnatural mother I see before me, is the sister whom I remember in the spring-time of the heart's feeling, and in the gentleness of early womanhood."

"Brother, if you wish me to speak, let that child go. I will not be humbled before her, or any human being."

"Yes, let me go," said Effie, again struggling. "I don't want to stay here."

"One question, first," said Mr. Horton. "Tell me truly, why you wished yourself dead?"

"Because every body hates me."

"And what makes you think every body hates you?"

"Because I am ugly," cried the child, in a low, bitter tone, looking darkly and sullenly at her mother.

"I will love you, Effie, if you are good, as well as if you were my own child. But you must not give way to such violent passions. Be gentle, if you wish to be loved. Be gentle, if you wish to be beautiful."

He put her down from his knee, where he had seated her, and motioned that she might depart. She stood for a moment as if irresolute, then threw her arms around his neck, kissed his cheeks, his

hands, and even the sleeves of his garment, in a most passionate manner, and ran out of the room.

"Oh! Clarinda," cried he, greatly moved, "what a heart you are throwing away from you!"

"To me she has always been sullen and cold," said Mrs. Dushane; "she has never shown me any affection, but, on the contrary, the greatest dislike."

"Because the fountain of her young affections has been frozen, and her young blood turned to gall," replied her brother. "She has been brought up with the withering conviction that she is an object of hatred and disgust to those around her, placed in glaring comparison with her beautiful sister, treated like a menial, her dress neglected, her manners uncultivated, and her sensibilities crushed and trodden under foot. Talk about her affections! You might as well take those very geranium leaves, and grind them with your heel, till you have bruised out all their fragrance, and then murmur that they gave you back no sweetness. But that child has affections, warm, glowing affections, though you have never elicited them—and a mind, too, though you have never cultivated it; but if God grant me the opportunity, I will take possession of the unweeded wilderness of her heart and mind, and turn it into a blooming, domestic garden yet."

Mrs. Dushane was thunderstruck. She saw in prospective her darling Clara disinherited, and she knew not in what way to avert the impending calamity.

"Brother," cried she, putting her handkerchief to her eyes, "you are strangely altered. You used to

love me once, but now the stranger within my gates would treat me with more kindness. You don't know what provocations I have, or you would not accuse me of such cruelty and injustice."

"You forget, Clarinda, that I have been a witness myself of your injustice. I do not make accusations, but appeal to self-evident truths—and did you not suffer Clara to depart, without once rebuking her for her falsehood and guilt?"

"Brother, I believe you hate Clara."

"I have no love for her faults, and to speak the honest truth, I never liked *favourites*. From the time of ancient Joseph's coat of many colours, which excited the envy and hatred of his brethren, to our days of modern refinement, favouriteism has been the fruitful source of sin and sorrow, and oftentimes of blood and death. Do not accuse me of unkindness, Clarinda, because I speak strongly of the evils you have caused. I would rouse you to a sense of your danger, and place before you, in all their length and breadth, the sacred duties you have too long neglected."

"I may have been wrong," cried Mrs. Dushane, apparently softening; "indeed, I know I have been, but I never could govern Effie in any other way than by severity. She is the most singular child you ever saw, and you are the only person who ever seemed to love her. You remember, brother, when I was a young girl, I was very much admired for my beauty, and perhaps was led to attach an undue value to it. My greatest ambition was to have a beautiful infant, and when Effie was said to be so remarkably ugly, I

could not help it, but my heart seemed steeled against her; and she was a very cross infant, too, and cried day and night. I could hear the nurse calling her a cross, ugly thing, till I was ashamed to have her in my sight. Then Clara was so uncommonly beautiful, and such a sweet, smiling, bewitching little infant, I could not help idolising her. Every body called her an angel, and indeed you must acknowledge she has the beauty of one. Then she is so affectionate and loving. You don't know how she twines around one's heart. To be sure, she was very wrong just now, very wrong; but pray forgive her this one fault. You saw how bitterly she wept. It was only the dread of your displeasure. You have no idea how tenderly she loves you. Forgive Clara, for my sake, and I will be kind to Effie for yours."

"For your own sake, my beloved sister," said Mr. Horton, seating himself by her side, and taking her hand affectionately in his. "The consciousness of a fault, is one step to reformation. Only cultivate a mother's feelings for Effie, and, believe me, you will be repaid for all your care."

Late that evening, as Mr. Horton was walking pensively in the garden, whose walks and arbours were partially illumined by the light of a waning moon, he was attracted by a dark object under one of the trees. Supposing it some animal, which had gained unlawful admittance, he approached to drive it from the enclosure, when he was startled by the appearance of two large black eyes turned upwards to the heavens, flashing out from a cloud of gipsy-looking hair.

"Effie," cried he, "what are you doing here so late, and alone?"

"Nothing," replied she, springing on her feet; "I was only looking at the moon and stars."

"You had better go and look at them through your bed-curtains," said he, passing his hand over her dew-damp hair; "it is time for little girls to be in bed and asleep."

"I cannot sleep so soon," said the child; "I think too much, and I wish too much."

"What is it you wish so much, Effie?"

"Oh! I wish to be up among the stars, out of the way of every body here; and then they look as if they love me, with their sweet, bright eyes."

Mr. Horton took her hand, and led her slowly and gently along.

"You seem to want to be loved, Effie?"

"Oh! yes," answered she, with energy. "I would die to be loved only half as well as Clara."

"Well, listen to me, Effie, and I will tell you how you may be loved even better than Clara. You must not think that it is only beautiful persons who are loved."

"But they hate me because I am ugly," interrupted Effie.

"You are not ugly, my child, and as you grow older, you will grow handsomer. But you must forget your looks, and think of cultivating your mind and heart. You must try to be loved for something better than beauty, and beauty perhaps will come, without thinking of it."

Effie looked up to him with a smile which really had a beautifying influence on her face, seen by that soft moonlight.

"If I could only be with *you* all the time," said she, "I should be happy."

"Would you, indeed, like to leave your home, and come and live with me?"

"Would I?" cried she, suddenly stopping—"I would walk barefoot to the end of the universe; I would feed on bread and water all my life, if I could only live near you."

"Perhaps we will live together one of these days," said he, smiling at her enthusiasm, "but I will promise you better fare than bread and water. And now, good night—and God bless you, my own darling Effie!"

Effie retired to bed, but long after she laid her head upon her pillow, she whispered to herself the endearing epithet, which had melted into her inmost heart. It was the first time she had ever been so fondly addressed, and even in her dreams she thought a gentle voice was murmuring in her ear, "my own darling Effie!" Oh! how sweet to the neglected, lone-hearted child, was the language of sympathy and love! It was like the gurgling fountain in the arid desert—the nightingale in the dungeon's solitude—the gentle gale that first wakened the wild music of her soul. It seemed that till that moment there had been a chill weight of lead in her bosom, cold and deadening, but that it was now fused in the glowing warmth of love, and flowing in one stream of affection,

reverence, gratitude, and almost worship, to the feet of her benefactor and friend.

When Mr. Horton proposed to his sister to take Effie home with him, she could not disguise her mortification and displeasure. Effie, the heiress of her uncle's fortune, to the exclusion of Clara, was a circumstance too intolerable to be endured. The ugly Effie chosen in preference to the beautiful Clara! She would gladly have refused the request, but she knew not what plea to urge against it. She had herself acknowledged her unnatural dislike to the child, and her neglect of all a mother's duties towards it was a too evident truth. In vain she sought to stifle the voice of upbraiding conscience. It would be heard, even amidst the whirlwind of passion that raged in her breast. Mr. Horton's determination was to remove Effie as far as possible from the associations of her childhood, to place her at school, where she could have every opportunity for the development of her talents, and the discipline of her character—and then, if she fulfilled his hopes, to adopt her as his own, and make her the heiress of his fortune, and the inheritor of his name.

Clara was outrageous when she learned the new destiny of her sister. She pouted, wept, and stamped, in the impotence of her wrath. Effie should not go home with her uncle, and get all his money, a whole million of dollars, away from her. She didn't want to be pretty any more. She wished she were ugly. She would be ugly, if it were only to spite her

mamma, because she had not made her uncle like her better than Effie.

Her mother, instead of soothing and petting her with the halcyon strains of flattery, as she was wont to do when her favourite got up a domestic storm, now vented upon her the anger she dared not manifest before her brother.

"It was your own fault," said she, "you spoiled, ungrateful child; you broke my geranium, and then meanly lied about it. You had better not wish yourself ugly, for you will have nothing but your beauty to depend upon, when you grow up. Not a cent of money will you have for a fortune, while your sister will be an heiress and—a belle——"

"I don't care," cried Clara, scornfully pouting her rose-leaf lips. "I'll be a belle too; and I don't want a fortune. I'll marry somebody with a great big fortune, and you sha'n't live with me, either, Madame Mamma."

Clara's appellation for her mother, in moments of passion, was "Madame Mamma;" and Madame Mamma began to feel a foretaste of the anguish caused by that "sharper than a serpent's tooth," the tongue of a thankless child.

Having depicted a few scenes in the childhood of the two sisters, and shown the different influences, emanating from the same source, which operated in the characters of both, the lapse of a few years may be imagined, and those who have become interested in the *ugly Effie*, may see her once more in the period of adolescence—when released from the discipline of a

school, she fills a daughter's place in her uncle's household. The mansion of Mr. Horton was such as became his princely fortune. It was on a lordly scale, and presented an elegance of architecture and refinement of taste unequalled in that part of the country where he resided. It was shaded on all sides by magnificent trees, and a smooth lawn stretched out in front, intersected by an avenue of symmetrical poplars, and surrounded by a hedge of perennial shrubs. Underneath one of the trees that shadowed the walls, and looking out on this rich, velvet lawn, sat the benevolent owner of this noble establishment, whose dignified person corresponded well with the other features of the scenery. A young girl stood near him, holding a bow in her left hand, and watching the motions of a young man, who was feathering an arrow fitted for that sylvan bow. Her figure had scarcely attained its full height, but it had all the rounded proportions and undulating outlines of early womanhood. Her head, covered with short raven curls, gave her the appearance of a young Greek, but her clear, dark complexion, of perfect softness and transparency, assimilated her more to the Creole race. Her features were not regular nor handsome in themselves, but they were lighted up with animation and intellect, and illuminated by such large, splendid black eyes, that it would have been difficult for the most fastidious connoisseur of female beauty to have judged them with any severity of criticism. From the bow, on which she partly leaned, the quiver suspended over her shoulder, the wild grace of her

attitude, and the darkness of her complexion, she might have been mistaken for one of those daughters of the forest which American genius has so often glowingly described.

"That will do, Dudley," said she, playfully snatching the arrow, and fitting it to her bow; "better reserve some of your skill to fledge your own arrows, for you know I can shoot like Robin Hood himself."

The young man laughed, and the trial of skill commenced. They shot alternately, and scarcely had the gleaming arrow darted from the string, than they each pursued its flight over the lawn, striving for the glory of first reaching the fallen missile. At last the young girl hit the target in the very centre, and Mr. Horton pronounced her the victor.

"You must surrender, Dudley," said he; "there is no disgrace in yielding to Effie—as swift a foot, as true an eye, and as steady a hand——"

"And as warm a heart," interrupted she, approaching him with a cheek to which exercise had given a colour like the coral under the wave, and seating herself on the grass at his feet. "But what shall be my reward, dear uncle? In the merry days of the 'Lion-hearted King,' the victor always received some crown, or trophy of his skill or valour."

While she was speaking, Dudley had been gathering some of the flowers and perennial leaves of the shrubbery, and had woven them into a rustic garland, which, sportively kneeling, he placed upon her brow.

"I suppose, if I were versed in the language of



chivalry," said the youth, "I should address you as the queen of love and beauty."

"Beruty!" repeated Effie, with a laugh that made the green walks ring. "What would my mother and Clara say if they heard such an appellation given to their ugly Effie? You needn't look so mockingly, Dudley, for you may ask my uncle if, four years ago, I wasn't the ugliest little gipsy he ever beheld."

"You have, indeed, changed most marvellously, Effie," replied he, passing his hand carelessly over the head that rested against his knee; "and you may thank the daily exercise in the open air, which you have been compelled to take, for its invigorating and beautifying influence."

"I may thank, rather, the parental tenderness, the kindness, and the care, that have been poured like balm into a bruised and wounded heart, healing and purifying it, and changing, as it were, the very life-blood in my veins!" exclaimed Effie, in her peculiarly impassioned manner. "Do you remember the night when you found me under the sycamore tree, and called me your own darling Effie? From that moment I date a new existence—from that moment life became dear to me, and oh! how dear, how very dear it has been to me since!"

Mr. Horton looked down upon her with glistening eyes, and blessed his God that it had been his destiny to appropriate such rich treasures of intellect and sensibility, and as he looked on the fair lands stretching around him, far as the eye could reach, blessed Him again that he could now leave one behind him

who was worthy to be the mistress of those beautiful possessions. There was another pair of brighter, younger eyes, looking down upon her, and wondering if it were possible she had ever been called the "ugly Effie." Perhaps she read his thoughts, for she smilingly said—

"I wish you could see my sister Clara."

"Why?"

"Because she is so exquisitely fair—so faultlessly beautiful."

"I do not like faultless beauties," replied he; "they are always insipid. I do not like blondes—they have no expression. I like to see a face that changes with the changing feelings—now dark, now bright, like the heavens bending above us."

"Do you think your mother and sister would know you, Effie?" asked Mr. Horton.

"I do not think they would," she replied, "for I sometimes hardly recognize myself. I should like to see them as a stranger, to see what impressions I might make. When shall I see them, dear uncle? Something whispers me I may yet be blest with a mother's and a sister's love."

"Are you not happy with me? Do you wish to leave me, Effie?"

"Never!—I want no other home than this. But, in looking back, I blame myself so much for the sullen and vindictive feelings I once dared to cherish. I tried so little to deserve the love which was not spontaneously bestowed, I long to prove to them that I am now not utterly unworthy of their regard."

"I honour your wishes," said Mr. Horton, kindly; "and when we return from Europe they shall be gratified. Two years will soon pass away. You will then have acquired all the advantages of travelling in classic lands. Dudley will have completed his education in the German universities, and in the freshness of transatlantic graces, can present himself to your fair sister, whose beauty you are so anxious he should admire."

Dudley began to reiterate his detestation of blondes, but Mr. Horton interrupted him to discuss more important matters.

Dudley Alston was a ward of Mr. Horton's, the orphan son of the most intimate friend of his youth. When his father died, he left him to the guardianship of Mr. Horton, with the conditions that he should finish his education in Europe, and that he should never marry without the consent of Mr. Horton.

Mr. Alston had not been dead more than a year, so that Dudley had never seen Effie in her chrysalis state. They had passed together their last vacation, and now again met, free from all scholastic restraints, with spirits buoyant as young singing birds, converting the still home of the widower into a bright scene of youthful exercise and hilarity. Mr. Horton rejoiced in the circumstances which had thrown so closely together these two congenial beings so dear to his affections, and which promised to draw them together in closer and more endearing union. Dudley was handsome, intelligent, and high-spirited; generous almost to prodigality; unsuspicious almost to cre-

dulity; impulsive and uncalculating, and possessed of an independent fortune, free from any of those mortgages and encumbrances which so often neutralize the property of reputed heirs. Where could he find a husband for Effie, combining so many rare endowments, and where could Dudley find a being like Effie, with a soul of fire, a heart of love, and a person which he now thought singularly fascinating? He was too wise to speak his hopes, but he thought it as impossible that their hearts should not grow together, as that two young trees, placed side by side, should not interlace their green boughs, and suffer their trembling leaves to unite. He wrote occasional letters to his sister, and received from her cold and brief replies. She expatiated chiefly on Clara's extraordinary beauty, and lamented her limited means to introduce her to the world as she would wish—hoped that Effie was improving, but declared her readiness to take her home, whenever her uncle was disgusted or weary of his charge. Mr. Horton never made known to her the astonishing improvement in Effie's appearance, for he wanted to dazzle her some day with the sudden lustre of the gem she had thrown from her heart. He always mentioned her in vague terms, expressed his general satisfaction in her good conduct, and approbation of her studious habits. "As nature did not make her a beauty," said he, "I intend she shall be a scholar, and no fear of her being called a *bas bleu* shall prevent me from giving her a thoroughly classical education. She is already familiar with Greek

and Latin, and during our European travels, she shall become mistress of all the modern languages."

"Oh! there is nothing so disgusting as a pedantic woman!" exclaimed Clara, with a shudder, as her mother finished the perusal of the letter. "I know French and Italian enough to sing all the fashionable songs and repeat all the common quotations, and that is all a young lady requires. As for Greek and Latin, I detest their very idea. But poor Effie needs something to distinguish her, even besides her uncle's fortune. I wonder if she is as ugly as ever. *I* should really like to see her."

"So should I," replied Mrs. Dushane, with an involuntary sigh, for there were moments when nature spoke in her heart, and she had become convinced, from her own fatal experience, that there were other qualities necessary in a daughter besides personal beauty. There were times "when the whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint," when she would have welcomed a filial hand to bathe her temples, or hold her aching brow, even though it were the hand of her neglected child. There were times when the rebellious will, the selfish vanity, the careless disrespect, or bold defiance of the spoiled favourite, made her feel as if Heaven's retribution might be felt in this world. At others, when she saw her caressed and admired, and heard herself envied as the mother of such a paragon, she tried to convince herself that disobedience and ill-humour were only slight flaws in this matchless diamond, which it would be invidious to dwell upon. She had had no communication with her

brother during his residence in Europe, and believing that all intercourse with him would now probably cease, and that there was no hope of his substituting Clara for Effie, she became more and more anxious to secure for the former an establishment worthy of her charms. Clara was now before the world as an acknowledged belle, occupying that place in society for which she had been solely calculated, and which she had been made to believe a part of her birthright.

One evening, Mrs. Dushane accompanied her daughter to the house of a lady who, being a great amateur in music, was very fond of giving concerts. Clara, as a beauty, and a brilliant performer, was always invited. This evening, the lady told Clara to look her prettiest, and do her prettiest, as a young lady was to be present—a stranger, just arrived in town—who was said to have most remarkable and fascinating accomplishments. Clara's vain and eager eye ran over the crowd, in search of one who would have the hardihood to rival her. She had scarcely assured herself that there were none but familiar faces around her, when the lady of the house approached and begged permission to introduce her to Miss Horton, the young lady whose coming she had announced. The company fell back as the hostess led Clara and her mother through the folding doors, to the centre of another apartment, where a young lady stood beneath the full blaze of the chandeliers, leaning on the arm of a young and distinguished-looking stranger. Clara gazed intently on the form of this rival beauty, and a feeling of relieved self-complacency

dimpled the roses of her cheeks. Those on whom nature has lavished her living lilies and carnations, are very apt to depreciate the charms of those whose pretensions to loveliness are based on other attributes than mere beauty of complexion. That of the young stranger was what Clara called dark, and it might have appeared so, contrasted with the dazzling whiteness of her own, but it had that oriental delicacy and transparency so seldom found except in eastern climes. Her eyes were so dark and resplendent that their brightness would have been almost overpowering had they not been softened by long, sweeping lashes, of the same jetty hue as her luxuriant and shining hair. Her figure was exquisite in repose, and from its waving outline promised that grace of motion which is more pleasing than beauty itself. There was nothing conspicuous in her dress save a small diamond star that sparkled amid the darkness of her tresses, like a lone planet on "night's ebon brow." The gentleman on whose arm she leaned—ah,

"Not his the form, not his the eye,  
That youthful maidens went to fly."

Clara marked him as her victim, and met his exceedingly earnest gaze with a glance of soft allure-ment. The young lady, whose air and appearance betrayed familiarity with the most elegant and fashionable society, nevertheless manifested no small degree of embarrassment while passing through the customary forms of introduction. She coloured deeply, and her eyes were bent down with an ex-

pression of modesty and humility entirely unexpected from her previous bearing.

"Horton!" repeated Mrs. Dushane, when her name was announced; "I have a brother of that name now in Europe. It is a long time since I have seen him, however," she added, with a sigh.

"Then I hope you will have pleasing associations connected with me, madam," said Miss Horton, in a sweet, low voice.

Mrs. Dushane, who was prepared to wage warfare with one who might rival her daughter, could not help feeling the charm of such affability and sweetness. She wondered who the Mr. Alston was, who accompanied her, but, notwithstanding his juxtaposition with the attractive stranger, she could not but hope that he was the rich and distinguished individual heaven had destined for her favourite child.

Music was the order of the evening, and Clara was led to the piano, Miss Horton declining to play first. Being from early childhood accustomed to sing and play in public, she had no faltering of modesty, to mar the brilliancy of her execution. She sang and played as she did every thing else, for effect—and it was generally such as the most exacting vanity could desire. Mr. Alston and Miss Horton stood near her, and evinced, by their silent attention, the most flattering interest in the beautiful songster.

"And now, Miss Horton," cried the impatient hostess—and "Miss Horton" passed from mouth to mouth, as the circle pressed and narrowed around her—"Perhaps Miss Horton would prefer the harp?"

"She *was* more accustomed to the harp," she replied, and a splendid instrument was drawn toward her.

Clara was no proficient on the harp, having, in a fit of obstinacy, given up her lessons, because the chords blistered her delicate fingers. She felt a thrill of envy, as she beheld Miss Horton seat herself gracefully before the lyre, such as the "shepherd monarch once swept," and pass her white hands over the strings. At first her touch was soft, and her voice low, and she looked at Clara as if deprecating her criticism; but, after a while, she looked at no one—she thought of nothing but the spirit of music that filled her soul, thrilled through her nerves, flowed in her veins, and burned upon her cheek. There was no affectation in her manner—there was enthusiasm, sensibility, fire—but it was the fire from within, illuminating the temple, which its intensity sometimes threatened to destroy. It is true, she once or twice raised her glorious black eyes to heaven, but it was because music naturally lifted her thoughts to heaven, and her glance followed its inspiration.

"Are you not weary?" asked Clara, after she had again and again yielded to the entreaties of her auditors to give them another and yet another strain.

"No," answered she, rising; "but I must not forget that others may be, notwithstanding their apparent sympathy with an enthusiast like myself."

"Oh! Mr. Delamere," cried Clara, addressing a pale, pensive, and intellectual gentleman, who had stood, as if spell-bound, by the harp, "do not look so

reproachfully at me; I did not think of putting a stop to your ecstasy."

"You are right," said he, drawing a deep inspiration; "I was forgetting the mortal in the immortal."

"Oh! that we all, and always could!" exclaimed Miss Horton; "but those who speak of immortality in a scene like this, must be singularly bold."

"Perhaps it would be more in keeping by that window, which looks out upon the magnificence of an evening sky," answered Mr. Delamere, with a smile so winning, she could not but yield to the invitation; and, seated in a curtained embrasure, which admitted the fresh night breeze, she soon found she was with a companion to whom she was not ashamed to communicate her most glowing thoughts, for she "received her own with usury." He had travelled over many lands—over the countries from which she had just returned—and she felt as if she heard once more the song of the Alpine peasant, the rich strains of the Italian improvisatore, or beheld again the sublime and storied scenes so vividly impressed upon her memory. But, at times, her abstracted eye told of other subjects of contemplation. She thought of the mother whose unkindness had embittered her childhood, now smiling unconsciously on her neglected offspring, and she longed to throw herself on her neck, and ask her to forget the past, and welcome back her no longer ugly Effie. She looked at her sister, on whose angelic face evil passions had left no more trace than the rough bark on the

glassy wave, and, forgetting the scorn and contumely she had heaped upon her in the first, dark portion of her life, she yearned to embrace her, to press to her own those smiling lips, and call her by the sweet name of sister.

"Not yet," said she to herself; "I have promised my uncle to shine before them a little while, at least till I have won their admiration as a stranger, and triumphed as another, ere I allow them to recognize in me the hated and ugly Effie."

Surprised at her silence, Mr. Delamère watched her thoughtful and varying countenance with an interest that surprised himself. His early history was romantic. In the very dawn of manhood he had formed an attachment for a fragile and lovely young creature, who expired suddenly on the very morning of her nuptial day, and whose white bridal wreath was placed upon the shroud that mantled her virgin bosom. Delamère, in the anguish of so awful a bereavement, secluded himself long from the world, which, to him, seemed covered with a funereal pall, and devoted himself to the memory of the dead. But, at length, the solicitations of friendship, the energies of youth, and the strong necessity of social life, drew him back to the scenes which he had once frequented, chastened by sorrow, enriched by experience, the history of the past written on his pallid cheek, and speaking from his pensive eye. No wonder that the music of Effie's voice had thrilled through a heart whose strings had once been so rudely broken. He felt for the young songstress a most painful interest,

for he saw she was one born to feel and to suffer; for when were deep feeling and suffering ever disunited?

"Is not Clara beautiful, Dudley?" asked Effie, the morning after the sisters met. "Is she not beautiful as the dreams of imagination?"

"She is, indeed, most exquisitely fair," answered he; "she has almost conquered my prejudices against blondes. But she is no more to be compared to you, Effie, than a clear, cloudless day is to a starry, resplendent night.

*'Thou walk'st in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies.'*"

"Don't flatter me, Dudley," cried she impatiently; "I know its exact value, which few girls, so young as myself, can say. Let there be nothing but truth and sincerity between us. Now is the time to prove whether the love you bear me is the result of habit and association, or that passion which would have selected me for its object, though we had been heretofore sundered as far as from pole to pole. Unfortunately, my uncle's wishes are known to both of us, revealed in an unguarded moment. To me, I acknowledge, his slightest wish is a law, and you know my heart has not murmured at his will."

She blushed, and averted her eyes, which she was conscious expressed in still stronger language the feelings she was uttering.

"What is it you mean?" exclaimed he vehemently. "Do you doubt my truth and constancy, when, from

the first moment I beheld you, I have scarcely had a thought or wish which has not been entwined with you? You were the star of my boyhood, you are the cynosure of my manhood, and age will bring no change. No, it is for me to doubt—not you, Effie.”

While this conversation was passing between them, at the hotel where Mr. Horton had put up, incog., for the purpose already explained, Mrs. Dushane and Clara were expatiating on the young stranger who had flashed across their path the preceding evening.

“I do not think her really handsome, mother,” said Clara; “she is not fair enough for that. She reminded me of some one whom I have seen before, but I cannot think who it is.”

“It is the same case with me,” said her mother; “I have been trying to think who she is like, but in vain. She certainly created a great sensation, and she was very affable and polite to me. How I wish you had not given up the harp, Clara! It’s a thousand times more graceful an instrument than the piano. It was nothing but your waywardness. I told you you would repent of it some day.”

“If I did play on the harp,” said Clara, pettishly, “I wouldn’t put myself into such ecstasies at my own music, as she did. I don’t believe Mr. Alston admires her singing much, for he talked to me almost the whole time.”

“Yes, because you talked to him. But, seriously, Clara, he is a fine-looking young man, and may be very rich. You had better try to captivate him, even if he is already captivated by Miss Horton. How

familiar that name does sound! We must invite them to our house—make a party for them—for they evidently are persons of distinction.”

“Not a musical party, mother. One good thing, however, we have no harp here.”

The party was given, and Effie crossed once more, with unconquerable emotions, the threshold of her childhood’s home. She entered the drawing-room, followed by a train of obsequious admirers, and received by the mistress of the mansion with all the pomp and ceremony of fashionable politeness. She was magnificently dressed, for it was her uncle’s pleasure that she should be so, and Clara felt, with envy and bitterness, that she was eclipsed by this splendid stranger.

“I will win Alston, if I die,” ejaculated she to herself: “for I know she loves him, and it will be such a triumph!”

Monopolized as Effie was, with Delamere flitting a pensive shadow at her side, it was difficult for Dudley Alston to claim any portion of her attention. It was therefore an easy task for Clara to monopolize *him*. She laid aside her frivolity, veiled her vanity, and taxed her mind to the fullest extent of its powers, to interest and amuse him. She had a great deal of tact, and could talk with a fluent tongue, while the loveliest smiles gave a charm to the words she uttered. Dudley could not help being pleased with this flattering attention. He knew from Mr. Horton that she was a spoiled and unamiable child, and was prepared to dislike and avoid her, but he could not believe



ought but gentleness now dwelt in a breast so fair. Effie had entreated him to endeavour to think favourably of Clara, forgetting her childish foibles, and for her sake he ought to do it. Mrs. Dushane was more and more delighted with Miss Horton, for nothing could be more deferential than her manners towards her. She sought her conversation, and turned from all her admirers, whenever she had an opportunity of addressing her. Mrs. Dushane could hardly withdraw her eyes from her face. That haunting resemblance! It vexed and pained her. Once, moved by a sudden reminiscence, she whispered to Clara—

"It is the most ridiculous thing I ever knew—and yet there is something about Miss Horton that really makes me think of our Effie."

"Shocking!" exclaimed Clara, laughing outright. "What would Miss Horton say, if she knew you compared her to such a thing as Effie?"

Alston caught the name of Effie.

"You were speaking of some one by the name of Effie," said he. "I have always admired it since I read the Heart of Midlothian. Is the Effie to whom you allude, as beautiful as the lily of St. Leonard's?"

"Oh no—it is my own sister, whom my uncle adopted, and who is now in Europe with him. She is very far from being pretty."

"Indeed," said he, "is that possible, and your sister, too? Does she not resemble you in the least?"

"No," answered she, with a shiver of disgust. "She is lean, swarthy, and almost deformed. But

uncle will give her a large fortune, and that will make up for her defects."

"Perhaps she has improved since you saw her last," said Dudley, and he could not help casting an admiring glance towards Effie, whose graceful head was at that moment turned towards her mother—in the act of listening. Effie had been praising the beauty of Clara, and asked if she were an only daughter.

"No—I have one beside," answered Mrs. Dushane, in a confused manner; "but she lives with her uncle, who has adopted her."

"Is it long since you have seen her, madame?"

"Oh! yes—she was a little child when he took her, and now she is a young lady."

"If she was as beautiful as her sister, I should think you would long to see her," said Effie.

"She wasn't to be compared to Clara: indeed, she was as ugly as her sister is pretty!"

"Poor girl!" cried Effie; "I hope you did not love her less because Nature denied the gift of beauty?"

"Why, no," stammered Mrs. Dushane: "one can't help their looks. But hers were uncommon."

"Do you think you would know her now, after so long an absence?"

"Yes—I should know her any where. She looked like nobody in the world but herself."

A half-suppressed sigh, which followed these words, sounded in Effie's ear like the music of the spheres. She unconsciously echoed it, and it was echoed yet again, for the pensive Delamere was lingering by her side,



and this token of sensibility interested him more than all the brilliancy of her attractions.

"Can she have known sorrow?" thought he. The next self-interrogation was—"Has she known love? And oh! how ardently, how devotedly," thus continued his meditations, "such a being must love! Would she accept the reins of a heart once impassioned as her own? Would she mingle the unfaded blossoms of her youth with the dark cypress and melancholy yew?"

Effie, touched by the soft gloom that hung like a cloud around him, lent a more than willing ear to his conversation. But, while she listened to him, her thoughts often wandered to one whom Clara kept ever near her, and on whom her eyes turned with an expression of unequivocal admiration. A pang shot through her heart, such as but one passion can inflict. Then another succeeded, that she was capable of yielding to such an emotion.

"If he be not mine, wholly mine, heart, soul and life, I will resign him, though I die in the effort," was the language of the maiden's soul. Her love had hitherto flowed on, a clear, unruffled stream, rising in the green hills of adolescence, its channels margined with flowers, and its current gilded by the sunbeams. Now the waters were becoming troubled, for they were rolling over a rocky bed. Did the rocks betoken that a whirlpool was near, and was the frail bark of her happiness to be wrecked in its vortex?

One morning, when the demon of ill-temper, roused by some petty disappointment, had full possession

of Clara, and proud Mrs. Dushane, as usual, was the victim of its inflictions, a letter came from Mr. Horton, announcing his return from Europe, and his intention of visiting her immediately, with his adopted daughter. This annunciation could not have been made at a moment more propitious for Effie; for her spirit was chafed and smarting from the ungrateful conduct of Clara. She sat, however, like one in a trance, for she was ashamed and perplexed in what manner to receive her long-estranged daughter. An acknowledged heiress, fresh from the courts of Europe, was a being of some consequence, no matter how ugly she might be.

"Poor Effie!" exclaimed she; "I did treat her shamefully, and all for the most selfish and passionate of human beings, with nothing on earth to recommend her but a little beauty, of which I am getting heartily sick."

"Oh! *Madame Mamma*," cried Clara, who still retained some of the deeply respectful language of her childhood; "it is too late to sing that song; you are ten times more vain of me than I am of myself. If I am vain, you taught me to be so; if I am passionate, you set me the example. 'It won't do for folks that live in glass houses to throw stones.' But, good heavens, what shall we do with Effie, at all these fine parties they are making for Miss Horton? Oh! I forget she can talk Greek and Latin, and French, and Italian. She is a learned lady, and will put me quite in the shade. An heiress, too! Perhaps Dudley Alston will fall in love with her. What in the world

shall I say to her? I declare I never felt so strange about any thing in my life."

"You had better treat her kindly, if it is only from policy, Miss Clara, for, though you deserve it not, she may share her fortune with you—for I remember well the poor thing was generous to a fault!"

Clara, upon reflection, concluded to act upon this hint, and she began to think too that it would be a delightful thing to have Effie near, as a foil to her own beauty. She would shine still brighter in the dark, beaming eyes of Dudley Alston.

Mrs. Dushane felt in a state of trepidation the remainder of the day. The sound of carriage wheels made her start, and change colour. The sudden opening of the door made her heart beat almost to suffocation.

"Oh! how I wish it were over!" she would say. "If I only knew how she felt towards me, I should be easy. If I only knew how she looked! She can't help being ugly, though."

About the twilight hour, the carriage of Mr. Horton did indeed roll up to the door, and Mrs. Dushane beheld her brother descend with a veiled lady clinging to his arm. A large shawl wrapped her figure, though the weather did not seem to require such a protection. Even when she entered, they could see nothing of her face through the thick green veil that covered it.

"Ugly still!" thought Clara, "or she would not take such pains to hide herself."

"I have brought you back a daughter," said Mr. Horton, after embracing his sister and Clara; "but

remember, my sister, if you place the least value on a brother's love, not to wound her feelings again, with regard to her personal deficiencies. She comes to you a good, affectionate and intelligent girl, who cherishes no vindictive feelings for the past, and who is anxious to show you all the tenderness of a child."

"Only promise to love me, my mother, half as well as you do Clara," said Effie, in a trembling voice, throwing her arms around her mother's neck and leaning her head on her shoulder, "and I will not ask for more."

Mrs. Dushane, completely overcome by this unexpected softness and humility, pressed the veiled figure of her child to her heart, and wept and sobbed till her brother led her to a seat, and calmed her agitation.

"And you too, my sister," cried the same sweet, tremulous voice; "let us henceforth love one another."

Clara returned the embrace, with a semblance of warmth, but she was dying with curiosity to look under the green veil and the muffling shawl. She saw with surprise, however, that the hand which clasped hers, was of exquisite delicacy and symmetry, soft and jewelled as her own.

"Let me take off your bonnet and shawl," said she; "you must be very warm."

The servant at this moment entered with lights, thus dispersing the shades of twilight which lingered in the room. Effie first gave the shawl into Clara's

eager hand, revealing by the act the full outlines of her splendid figure; then throwing off the bonnet and veil, and shaking back her jetty ringlets, she turned and knelt at her mother's feet.

"Behold your Effie!" exclaimed she—"no longer sullen and unloving, and I trust no longer ugly. My dear uncle was determined you should admire me, before you knew my identity, so you must forgive me for having appeared in masquerade. Having assumed his honoured name, it was an easier task. I think you liked me as a stranger;—refuse not to love me now."

Mrs. Dushane was so bewildered and astonished and delighted, she was very near falling into hysteric fits. When she was composed enough to speak, she repeated in a kind of triumph:

"I said she looked like our Effie—I said she made me think of our Effie."

Clara's blooming cheek turned to the whiteness of marble. The chill of envy penetrated to her very heart. The fascinating being whom she dreaded as a rival, was then her own sister; so long the object of her contempt and derision. The transformation was too great. It was incredible! Effie met her cold, fixed gaze, and an involuntary shiver ran through her veins. The image of Dudley Alston passed before her, and she feared to think of the future.

Mrs. Dushane was so proud of her new daughter, so pleased and excited by the eclat and romance of the circumstances that attended her arrival, and her

house was so thronged with visitors, she had hardly any time to think of Clara. But Clara was not forgetful of herself. To win Dudley Alston, whom she loved as far as her vain heart was capable of loving, was the end and aim of all her hopes and resolves. To win him from Effie was a double triumph, for which she was willing to sacrifice truth, honour, and that maiden modesty which shrinks from showing an unsolicited attachment. She believed that if she could convince Effie that she herself was beloved by Alston, she would be too proud ever to look upon him as a lover, and that, if Alston supposed Delamere a successful and favoured admirer of Effie's, the same pride would make him stand aloof and forbid him to seek an explanation. Effie was too ingenuous and high-souled to suspect Clara of acting this doubly treacherous part. She felt as only a nature like hers can feel, that Dudley Alston was more and more estranged from her, but she believed Clara was supplanting her in his affections, and disdained either by look or word to draw him back to his allegiance.

"What do you think of Dudley Alston, Effie?" asked Clara, abruptly, once when they chanced to be alone.

Effie's quick blood rushed burningly to her cheeks.

"As the associate of my youthful pleasures, as my fellow-student and fellow-traveller, he must naturally seem very near to me," she answered, with assumed composure.

"He is very handsome, very pleasing," said Clara, with affected confusion, "and I cannot help liking

him better than any one I ever knew; you who have known him so long, can tell me whether I may trust him—I will say it, Effie—whether I may dare to love him!”

Effie turned deadly pale—she looked in her sister’s face, and asked the simple question—

“Has he told you that he loved you, Clara?”

“Good heavens! what a question!” exclaimed Clara, with a look of offended modesty; “do you think I would have made such a confession, had I not been in the first place aware of his love?”

“No, surely you would not,” answered she, in a voice so strange and unnatural that Clara trembled at the bold step she had taken. She began to fear the consequences.

“What’s the matter, Effie?” said she. “Are you faint?”

“I don’t know,” she replied, passing her hand hurriedly over her brow; “but the air is very close here. I will go into the balcony.”

She rose as she spoke, and Clara rose simultaneously.

“I would rather be alone,” said Effie; and Clara dared not follow.

“The hour of trial is come,” thought Effie; “let me meet it without blenching!”

She wandered into the garden, and sat down under the shade of the sycamore, where her uncle had found her years before, longing, in the bitterness of her young heart, to die. How long she sat, she knew not—she was roused by the approach of Dudley Alston,

who, seeing her sitting like a pale statue there, forgot, for the moment, the withering doubts which Clara had been breathing into his ear.

“Effie, why are you here, sitting so pale and still?” cried he in a tone of the deepest tenderness.

Effie rose and leaned against the tree for support.

“Lean on me, dearest Effie,” continued he, passing his arm round her waist, and drawing her towards him; “you are ill—you are faint.”

Indignation gave her strength, as she released herself from his clasping arms.

“I can forgive inconstancy, Dudley, but not insult,” said she, and the lightning darted from her eyes;—“you remember that I told you, if the hour should come when your heart was not wholly mine, I would not wed my fate to yours, though life should be the sacrifice. Had you nobly and ingenuously told me that you no longer loved me, that my more beautiful sister had won the affection you once thought mine, I would have forgiven, I would still have loved you as a brother. But to mock me still with looks and words of seeming love—I cannot, will not bear it.”

“By the heaven above,” exclaimed the young man vehemently, “I swear this charge is false! Who dares to accuse me? If it be Delamere, his lily face shall soon wear another livery.”

“No, Dudley—wrong not one who is incapable of any thing mean and calumniating. Clara herself has disclosed to me your love and hers, and I here declare you as free from all allegiance to me, as the cloud that is passing over the sun. But she may as well build

her home on that thin, grey cloud, as trust for happiness to a heart as light and vain as yours."

"Effie!" cried he, forcibly seizing her hand, and holding her back as she turned to depart; "you shall not go from me thus. Come with me into your sister's presence, and let her explain this shameful mystery. I have never breathed one syllable to her but the commonplace language of admiration. My heart has never wandered from you toward her, or one of womankind. Come with me. I demand it as an act of justice—I claim it as a sacred right!"

"Yes," exclaimed a deeper voice from behind, "he has a right, and I will sustain it."

And Mr. Horton emerged from an arbour, which the foliage of the spreading sycamore partially formed. He had been reading in the shade—one of his daily habits in summer—and had overheard a conversation fraught with intense interest to him. Strange!—the good man despised the character of a listener, and yet it was the second time he had involuntarily acted the part of one, in the really dramatic history of his sister's family. He was indignant and excited, and drawing Effie's trembling arm through his, he led her towards the house, with no lagging footsteps. As they came through a back path, they entered the room before Clara had time to escape. When she met her uncle's stern eye and frowning brow, she knew she was to be arraigned as a criminal, in the presence of the man for whom she had bartered her integrity, and bartered it in vain.

"I have lost him forever," whispered her sinking heart, "but I will never recant what I have said—he never shall be hers!"

"Clara," said her uncle, approaching still nearer, and keeping his piercing eyes upon her, "tell me the truth, on your soul's peril—has this young man ever made professions of love to you?"

Clara bowed her head slowly, till her ringlets half-veiled her beautiful face.

"I have revealed it to my sister, and I cannot deny it to you."

"This is too much!" exclaimed Dudley, his face turning hueless as ashes. "Oh, if she were but a man!"

"Peace, Dudley!" cried Mr. Horton, in a commanding voice. Then again turning to Clara.

"I remember, years ago, a little girl, who wantonly broke the geranium her mother prized, and, to screen herself from blame, boldly accused her innocent sister of the fault she had herself committed. Have you forgotten it?—or the shame and sorrow of that hour? Clara, you are still the same—false, false to the very heart's core."

"You always hated me," cried Clara, trying to assume a bolder tone, in the desperation of her situation; "you always hated me, and took Effie's part against me. I wouldn't have told her what I did, though I have said nothing but the truth, if I had thought she would have cared any thing about it. I'm sure she might be satisfied with her new lover, Mr. Delamere, without making such a fuss about a

castaway, to whom I condescend to show some favour."

"Clara," exclaimed Effie, raising her brow from her uncle's shoulder, where she had bent it in anguish and shame during this disgraceful scene—"Clara, you have betrayed yourself, by this double falsehood. You know that I have refused Mr. Delamere as a lover, but that I honour him as a friend. I considered such a secret sacred, but you have forced me to reveal it. Dudley, my heart acquits you fully, freely, humbly—for oh! how much have I erred in thus doubting thy honour and thy truth!"

Their eyes met, as they turned towards each other. How they would have sealed their reconciliation cannot be known, for Mr. Horton threw his arms around them both so closely, in the fulness of his joy, that their hearts beat against each other, while they found a parental pillow on his own. Tears fell from the good man's eyes.

"God bless you, my children," cried he, kissing Effie's crimsoned cheek, "and make you a blessing to each other. Let not the falsehood and guile of others ever again shake your confidence and love. Let your love be founded on a rock—even the Rock of Ages; then the winds and waves may beat against it in vain."

During this scene, the guilty, foiled, and consequently wretched Clara, stole unnoticed from the apartment, and in the solitude of her own chamber gave vent to the violence of long-suppressed passion.

"Oh! that I had been born ugly!" she said, stamping in the impotence of her rage: then running to a

mirror, and gazing on her convulsed features—"I am ugly now—good heavens, how horrible are the effects of passion! Yes, mother," continued she—for Mrs. Dushane, who had heard the loud and angry voices below, without daring to enter, fearing in some way that Clara was involved in the difficulty, softly opened the door of the chamber and looked anxiously in—"yes, mother, come and see your *beauty* now! See your own work, and be proud! If you hadn't called me your beauty, your pet, your darling, till I sickened at your flattery, and loathed the author of it—if you had cultivated in me one moral virtue, I should never have been the detected, hated and despised thing I am now!"

Poor Mrs. Dushane! She had sown the wind, and reaped the whirlwind.

Effie, who pitied her unhappy sister, would gladly have shared her fortune with her, but this her uncle forbade.

"If she should be in want and sorrow, you shall relieve and comfort her," said he, in answer to her prayers. "If she marries, for your mother's sake, you may supply her wedding paraphernalia; but I will never make her the guardian of Heaven's bounty—never give her the means of administering to her own evil passions."

The UGLY EFFIE, soon a happy bride, became her mother's pet and darling. The BEAUTIFUL CLARA, still unmarried, continued to embitter her peace, and present a fatal example of the evils of maternal favouritism.

## The Fortunes of a Young Physician.

THE evening was cold and clear. The stars sparkled dazzlingly above, the frost sparkled white and chillingly below. Young Mordaunt wrapped his cloak closely around him and walked on with a rapid step.

The stranger who passed him in the dim starlight might have taken him for some Haroun Al Raschid in disguise, he wore his cloak with such lordly grace, and his head sat so nobly and proudly on his shoulders. But, alas! Mordaunt was very poor. He had but one dollar in his pocket, and he knew not what the morrow would bring forth. He was a young physician, just commencing practice in a large city, with no capital except his brains, but with a stock of enthusiasm, hope, and faith (notwithstanding a dark and mysterious destiny had shadowed his youth), sufficient to endow all the Medical Institutions in the world. He was now treading the margin of his profession, watching the great rushing sea of life that roared around him, ready to seize hold of some sinking mariner, and save him from destruction. But the poor wretches were sure to stretch out their trembling arms to some older, more experienced swimmer on the human tide, and the young man was obliged to work off his superfluous energy and skill in acts of gratuitous service. This evening he had been unusually fortunate. He had received one dollar as a fee, and having a passionate love of the drama, he was about to indulge

himself in a visit to the theatre, whose doors poverty had long closed against him. A distinguished actor was *starring* on the boards, and Mordaunt was hastening to secure a favourable seat in the parquette. At the corner of the street, he met a young man of the name of Wiley, who, turning round, walked in the same direction with him. Mordaunt always felt as if he came in contact with a counter stream of thought, when he met this young man; and now it seemed as if a dash of cold, quenching water was thrown over the glow of his anticipations. There was no sympathy, no congeniality. It was the contrast of fire and ice.

"Whither so fast, Mordaunt?"

"To the theatre. Are you disposed for the same amusement?"

"No; I cannot afford it!"

"Afford!" repeated Mordaunt, in an accent of surprise.

Wiley was reputed wealthy, and thousands taken from his pockets would scarcely leave as deep a void as Mordaunt's solitary dollar.

"I cannot afford the time," repeated Wiley. "Life is too short for the great purposes of utility, and too precious to be wasted in search of amusement. I find no leisure for such things myself; but every one has a right to put his own estimate on the gifts of God, and improve them as he thinks best."

There was something cold and cutting in the tone of his voice, something assimilated to the frosty atmosphere, that penetrated the ear of Mordaunt and chilled him.

"I know there are some," he replied, "who can keep on, day after day, and year after year, in the same tread-mill mode of existence, unconscious of weariness as of progress; but I cannot; I must have occasional excitement. I cannot sit forever in my office, waiting for the stagnant waters of the pool to be stirred by the angel of success. The principle of vitality burns too intensely in my bosom for inaction. It must have fuel. If not of the kind I most desire, the light combustibles which a random breeze may throw in its way——"

"For God's sake," exclaimed a broken voice, so suddenly it made them both start, "for God's sake, gentlemen, show me the way to a doctor. My wife is dying. Where can I find a doctor?"

The blaze of a gas-lamp fell full upon the face of the speaker. It was a man miserably poor, to judge by his patched and threadbare garments. He had no outer covering to protect him from the cold night air, and his old, napless hat, that beacon-sign of decaying gentility, looked as if it had been Fortune's foot-ball. In the weak, trembling under lip, the wan, bloodshot eye, the ravages of intemperance were written in defacing characters. At this moment, however, he was in the sober possession of all his faculties. Despair and remorse lent urgency and eloquence to his accents.

"For the love of Heaven," he again repeated, "direct me to a doctor. Though," he added with bitterness, "I have not a cent in the world to pay him——"

"I am a physician," cried Mordaunt, his warm, impulsive heart glowing within him at the prospect of being able to administer relief to suffering humanity. "Show me where you live. I will see what I can do for your wife."

"The Lord Almighty bless you!" exclaimed the suppliant, the tears which are ever ready to flow from the eyes of the inebriate washing his bloated cheeks.

"I wish you joy of your patient," said Wiley. "This must be the angel who is to stir the waters of the stagnant pool of life."

Just as Mordaunt was turning to follow the steps of his miserable conductor, without answering the sneering remark of Wiley, another man came rushing along the pavement as if the avenger of blood was behind him.

"What is the matter?" cried Wiley, moving instinctively from the path. "Are the blood hounds let loose to-night?"

"The horses have run away with my master," answered the man, panting for breath. "He has been thrown upon the pavement. His leg is broken—his arm is fractured. I want a doctor, a surgeon, at the quickest possible notice. For the love of mercy, direct me to the nearest."

"Well, Doctor Mordaunt," said Wiley, "your star seems to be in the ascendant to-night. I know this man's master. It is Mr. Goldman, the modern Croesus. Your fortune is made."

"I have promised this poor creature to go with



him," answered Mordaunt, struggling with the strong temptation that beset him. The glow of compassion faded. Turning suddenly to the wretched being who had been calling down blessings on his head, he said—

"Tell me where you live, and as soon as I have attended to the gentleman who requires my assistance, I will call and see your wife."

"O, sir, she is dying—I left her in spasms. She will die if you delay. You promised me, you know you did. God gave her life as well as the rich man. If you let her perish, God will judge you for it, and man, too."

The pale eye of the drunkard kindled fiercely as he spoke. He forgot that he had been draining, drop by drop, the heart's blood of her whose life he was requiring so vehemently of another.

"He is right," said Mordaunt, heaving off the temptation, with a long, deep inspiration; then directing the servant of Mr. Goldman to the office of Dr. Lewis, an eminent surgeon as well as physician, he immediately followed the rapid but unsteady steps of his guide.

"Yes," repeated he to himself, as he walked along, glad that he had girded himself for his task of mercy, "yes, he is right. Though waves of gold should roll over my path, they could not drown the faintest whisper of accusing conscience. Yet, what a glorious opportunity I have lost! Rich! Wiley says he is rich, and riches always give influence. Let me imagine the result of the incident, supposing I could have profited by this golden chance. He is rich—I

am skilful—at least, *occultly* so. He is suffering—I relieve him. He is munificent—I am grateful. He becomes eloquent in praise of the young physician, recommends him to favour, and favour comes fast treading on the heels of success. Dr. Mordaunt begins to make a name and fame. The poor little bark, that has kept close to the shore, without one favouring gale to fill its sail, now spreads them gallantly to the breeze, and floats fearlessly on the foaming billows of the main. Ah! perchance the rich man has a daughter—a lovely daughter—fair as the dream of a poet—a Cordelia in filial tenderness, an Imogen in purity, and a Juliet in love. She bends in transport over her recovering father, she blesses my healing power. She raises her eyes of dewy splendour to my face. The accents of gratitude, which she strives in vain to utter, melt on her sweet, rosy lips. I take her soft hand in mine, when——"

Mordaunt was suddenly checked in his sentimental reverie by coming in contact with a cold, damp wall, whose resistance almost threw him backward. His guide had turned into a narrow, dark alley, running back of a splendid block of buildings, and the damp, close air breathed of the mould and vapours of the tomb. But the pure stars glistened through the opening above with a concentration of brilliancy absolutely sunlike. Mordaunt realized their immense, immeasurable distance. He sighed as he looked up, thinking that even thus all that was bright and beautiful seemed to elude him, shining cold and high, alluring and baffling. One star of exceeding glory

riveted his gaze. Up in the centre of the zenith it shone, a blazing diamond on the forehead of night. By a sudden transition of thought, Mordaunt recalled the scene when the Chaldean shepherds beheld the star of the East beaming above the manger which was made the cradle of the infant God. What a glory thrown around poverty! A God in a manger! Should one be ashamed of lowliness, when the Deity had wrapped himself in it, as a mantle? Mordaunt felt a sublime contempt for all the gauds of this world. And this sudden lifting of the soul was caused by that one bright, ascendant star, on which his wandering gaze had fixed. That star was his—the whole heavens, with their resplendent host, were his. A soul, capable of taking in this amplitude of glory, was his—a heart, large enough to embrace all the suffering children of humanity, was his. How could he call himself poor? All the dark past was forgotten.

He was obliged to bend his head while passing into the low dwelling occupied by the patient. The light was so dim, contrasted with the white dazzle of the stars on which his eyes had been so long fixed, he did not at once see with distinctness the interior of the apartment into which he was ushered. But gradually every object came out as through the gloom of a morning twilight. A low bed, whose snow-white covering spoke of neatness and lingering refinement in the midst of penury and domestic misery, stood opposite the door, and above that snowy covering rose a pale and ghastly face, with closed eyelids and parted lips, through which the breath came slowly

and gaspingly. By the side of the bed sat a figure wrapped in a large, gray shawl, which nearly enveloped the whole person. The face belonging to this figure turned slowly toward him, as he approached the bed, and it shone upon him in that dim apartment like one of those evening stars he had just been contemplating, beaming through a dull, gray cloud. It was a face of youth and beauty, but pale, sad, and holy as a nun's; a countenance which had been bending over the couch of the dying till the shadow of mortality had passed over its brightness. No conscious start disturbed the quietude of her attitude, no sudden blush coloured the fair cheek, as she met the wondering glance of Mordaunt, who bowed his head in acknowledgment of her presence. A groan from the apparently dying woman recalled his attention to her, and taking her thin and sallow hand in his, he counted the low and flickering pulse; then lifting the candle from a little table not far from the bed, he held it so that the light might fall upon her faded and sunken features. Her eyelids moved not, as the rays flashed over them. He spoke to her in a clear, deep voice, but the sound did not penetrate her deafened ear.

"She is not dying, doctor?" cried the man, fixing his bleared and rueful eyes on Mordaunt's serious and earnest countenance. "You don't think she is dying, doctor?"

"She is very low, very low, indeed," replied Mordaunt. "How long has she been in this exhausted state?"

"About half an hour; ever since the spasm subsided," said the young lady with the gray shawl.

The voice was so sweet, and had such a subdued and holy tone, that Mordaunt held his breath to listen.

"O! it was terrible," she continued, "to witness that awful paroxysm!"

"Surely you were not alone with her?" exclaimed the young doctor, involuntarily.

"No," she replied, with a slight shudder; "a servant was with me, whom a short time since I sent for wine, thinking it might possibly revive her."

"I fear it may be too late," said Mordaunt. "Her nervous system seems completely destroyed, worn out by long struggles, I should think."

Here he riveted his gaze on the drunken husband, with a look that spoke volumes.

"I haven't killed her," he cried, weeping and sobbing aloud. "I know I have not always treated her as I ought—I have sometimes been rough to her, when I didn't well know what I was doing. I never struck her but once—as I remember—never—I didn't mean to hurt her—I haven't killed her, doctor——"

"But once!" exclaimed Mordaunt, indignantly. "It was enough! It was a death-blow!"

"Lord Almighty!" cried the man, staggering back into a chair, and turning frightfully pale, as another deep groan echoed through the room.

Mordaunt took up the vials clustered on the table, and after having examined them, poured some ether

in a glass, and having diluted it with water, put it to the passive lips of the patient. The odour of the ethereal fluid seemed to revive her. She breathed more easily, and the eyeballs began to move under the closed lids.

"She needs stimulants," said Mordaunt; "wine will not be strong enough. She must have brandy. Here," added he to the husband, taking from his purse the solitary dollar—that dollar which was to have been the open-sesame to the magic caverns of fancy—and placing it in his hand, "here, go to the nearest apothecary's and get a bottle of the best French brandy, such as they keep for the sick. Make haste."

The bloodshot eyes of the drunkard flashed up with a sudden and fierce delight. The very sound of the word *brandy* tingled his blunted senses. The sight of the money was fuel to his feverish and brutal desires. Mordaunt felt a gentle touch on his arm, and looking round, he saw the gleam of a white hand on his dark coat. The folds of the gray shawl swept momentarily against him.

"He is gone," said the young lady, in a tone of disappointment; "alas! he cannot be trusted."

"Surely, at a moment like this he *must* be faithful!" cried Mordaunt; yet the recollection of the insane gleam of his eye made him shudder.

"Strange that Hannah does not return," said the young lady, looking anxiously toward the door. Her countenance brightened even as she spoke, for a woman came to the threshold and beckoned her to

approach. Mordaunt heard a startling exclamation from the gray-shawled damsel, in answer to something the woman said, in a quick, low voice.

"Good heavens! My uncle! How could it happen? His arm and leg—both broken! O! what a dreadful night!"

She leaned against the frame of the door, as if overcome with the shock she had received. Mordaunt saw that she was deadly pale, and handed her a glass of water. She took it with a trembling hand, and as she raised her eyes to his face, he remembered his reverie about the rich man's daughter, and how her vision had passed before him, fixing her eyes of dewy splendour on his face. The vision seemed realized—only it was the rich man's niece, instead of his daughter, and he was in the poor man's hovel, instead of the rich man's palace.

"You will not leave this poor creature," said she, folding her shawl closely around her, and making a motion to Hannah to follow her. "My poor uncle! how much he must suffer!"

She stepped upon the threshold, unbonneted and unveiled.

"Surely you are not going abroad without a protector, at this hour?" cried Mordaunt, feeling the impossibility of leaving his poor patient alone, yet longing to offer his services as an escort.

"I have only to pass through the gate," she replied; "this cabin is back of my uncle's yard. God bless you, sir, for your kindness to this poor woman! She is worthy of it."

She was gone—the *Evening Star*, as his spirit called her—and he seemed left in darkness.

Yes! this must be the niece of Mr. Goldman, whom he might have had for a patient, and who might have opened to him the golden portals of success. Such an opportunity scarcely occurs more than once in a lifetime. And what good had he done to this poor woman? Ether and brandy might possibly add a few hours to her miserable existence; but even if he could bring her back to life, he would be bestowing no blessing. Life to a drunkard's wife!—it was a curse—a living death—a dying life. Better, far better that she should press the clay-cold pillow of the grave, than that bed of thorns. Yet he did not relinquish his cares. He fed the waning lamp of life with the oil of kindness, and continued to watch by the bed of the sufferer, bathing her temples with water, and moistening her lips with wine. He listened for the footsteps of the drunken husband, but the wretch came not. He was doubtless steeping his soul deeper still in the burning fluid of hell. Mordaunt remembered the soft pressure of the white hand on his arm, and wished he had sooner felt its warning touch.

About midnight, the poor, weak pulse his fingers pressed suddenly stopped, and Mordaunt found himself alone with the dead. As the inexpressible calm and placidity of death stole over the features, restoring something of youthfulness and beauty, and the charm of a great and solemn mystery rested upon them, he looked upon her with a strange

interest. The human frame was to him a wondrous and curious machine, a God-constructed, glorious instrument. He looked upon it with the eyes of science, and whether clothed in rags or fine linen, he recognized the hand of the Divine Architect.

But what must he do? Whom could he summon to that death-tenanted chamber? The *Evening Star* was now shedding its soft, pitying rays over another couch of suffering, that couch which his ministrations might also have soothed. Just as he was rising, resolved to rouse the inmates of the next cabin, and induce them to attend to the last duties of humanity, the door opened and Hannah quietly entered. She was a grave, respectable-looking woman, and seemed to understand at one glance the office that devolved upon her. Mordaunt felt as if his mission was now ended, and he was glad that it was so.

"How is the gentleman? How is Mr. Goldman?" asked he. "Is he very badly hurt?"

"Dreadfully, sir. His leg and arm are broken, and he is shockingly bruised, besides. You can hear him groan all over the house."

"And the young lady?"

"Miss Constance? She is with her uncle. She will not leave him, though the doctors all urge her to go, and she looks ready to drop down, too."

"Has he many doctors with him?"

"There are three below—enough to kill him, I am sure," added she, in a kind of *sotto voce*.

"I might have been one of that favoured trio,"

thought Mordaunt, "and now the weight of my last dollar is added to the millstone of sin that is dragging a wretch to the abyss of perdition. But I meant to do good. God forgive me for repining."

The history of the drunkard and his wife has nothing to do with our story, only as it serves to illustrate the character of our young physician, and to introduce him to Constance Goldman, one of those angels of mercy whom God sometimes sends into the world to drop balm into the wounds that sin has made, and to strew with roses and lilies the thorny path that leads to the grave.

Days and weeks passed away. Mordaunt continued to struggle on—to struggle on the very verge of penury, just able, with the strictest economy, to pay his daily expenses. His practice was extending, but chiefly among the poor, whose scanty purse he felt unwilling to diminish. He was gaining experience but losing hope. His youthful appearance was a bar to his success. He had a strong desire to cut off his bright, brown locks, which had a most obstinate and provoking wave, and assume a venerable-looking wig; to cover his sunny, hazel eyes with a pair of green spectacles, and wear an expression of supernatural gravity and intense wisdom. Every thing short of this, he did, to make himself older, but in vain. The fire of youth was burning in the temple of life, and it illuminated all surrounding objects.

Once, when he was walking with Wiley, (for, uncongenial as they were, they were frequent companions,) a carriage stopped at the door of a splendid

mansion just before them. A lady descended, whom he immediately recognized as the *Evening Star*. The gray cloud no longer enveloped her graceful figure, which was robed in all the elegance of fashion. The face was less pale and sad than when he saw her last, but still wore that celestial fairness which is seldom warmed with the colouring of earth. Mordaunt bowed low to the recognizing glance, while Wiley stepped forward with the freedom of an old acquaintance, and offered his assistance in leading her up the flight of marble steps which led to the door.

Mordaunt felt a sudden swelling of the heart against Wiley. He could not help it, though he despised himself for it. He knew by intuition that Constance would speak to him. He felt that he was not forgotten. Though her cheek, like the pure asbestos, kindled not at his approach, her eye had beamed with a modest but joyous welcome. He knew by intuition also that Wiley's cold and biting tongue would wither like frost every kindly sentiment she might now perchance feel for him. He did not dream that she had fallen in love with him, for he was not vain or presumptuous, but, associated as they had been in the holy task of mercy and compassion, he could not help thinking there was a sympathy between them, which he could not bear to have chilled. He did not want his name to be mentioned in her presence by the lips of Wiley. But why should he suffer his equanimity to be disturbed by such illusions? She might not condescend to mention him. She was compassionate, and looked kindly on him, when she had met him in the hovel of

the poor, but should he seek her in her own lordly home, the rich heiress might chill with her indifference (he could not associate with her the idea of *scorn*) the poor young physician. Mordaunt, in spite of his elasticity and hopefulness of spirit, was beginning to feel a little of the sickness of hope deferred. He had observed that morning, with rather sorrowful misgivings, that his best coat was a little more lustrous at the elbows than it was when he first wore it, and that the silken down of his hat was getting a little shorter and somewhat worn; especially on the rim in front, which he touched when making his graceful bows. There was nothing yet to detract from the gentility of his appearance, but he knew a day would come when the coat would grow rusty and the hat napless, and unless he had more profitable patients than the drunkard's poor wife, it would be long before he could purchase others. He entered his office, took off his hat, smoothed it carefully with the sleeve of his coat before he hung it on the peg, then exchanging his coat for a student's wrapper, he threw himself into a chair, waked up the dying coals in the grate, and folding his arms, gazed steadfastly on a majestic skeleton that stood in a corner of the room, silent but awful guardian of its solitude.

"Hail, grim companion," he exclaimed; "teacher, monitor, and friend! Hail, lonely palace of a departed king. No—empty cage of a liberated captive. How often has the poor prisoner beat in agony against the marble bars of his prison-house, struggling for release! How often has the proud monarch revelled in pride

behind that white, gleaming lattice-work! Strange! for six thousand years the great Architect of the universe has been building domes like these, frail, wondrous, glorious, but perishable—perishable temples of the imperishable—corruptible homes of incorruption; and for six thousand years to come, perchance, the same magnificent structures will rise and continue to rise, mocking the genius and invention of man. It is a proud thought that we, masters of the divine art of healing, are able to cheat time and the grave of their inalienable right, and preserve from decay and ruin fabrics more grand than Egyptian or Grecian art ever fashioned. Yes! ours is a noble art, and I exult that I am one of its disciples. But, alas! I am still very poor; and O! the irremediable disgrace that still clings to my name!”

We will leave Mordaunt for a while with the grim companion whom he makes the confidant of his wild, deep thoughts, and follow Wiley into the dwelling of the modern Croesus.

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Mr. Goldman, who was still suffering from his broken limbs, reclined upon a couch, near the fire. Wiley sat by his side; Constance, at a little distance. Wiley, when he wished to please, had the most insinuating manners, and he had a strong desire to please the uncle of Constance. He felt confident of success with him, but there was something about Constance he could not fathom. A holy serenity, a passionless calm,

over which the breath of admiration flowed like a cloud over crystal, leaving no impression on its pure, smooth surface. As she now sat, looking into the fire, with a soft languor diffused over her features, he was flattering himself that he might be the subject of her waking dream, when she startled him with the question, in her peculiarly sweet, low tone of voice—

“Who is the young gentleman who was your companion this evening?”

“It was young Doctor Mordaunt,” answered Wiley, vexed at finding another than himself the subject of her reverie. “But surely he could not have had the presumption to bow, as an entire stranger?”

“He is not an entire stranger, nor do I believe that he would be guilty of presumption, under any circumstances,” replied Constance, with a slight shade of haughtiness.

“Who is that you are speaking of?” asked Mr. Goldman, whose ear caught the sound of doctor. “Doctor Mordaunt? I never heard of him. Is he a distinguished physician?”

“He is a young tyro,” answered Wiley, “a true Don Quixote in his profession. To show you what chance he has of arriving at distinction, I will mention an incident, connected with him, in which you, sir, have a personal interest. The night when you were thrown from the carriage, and your footman came rushing through the street, in frantic haste for a doctor, ready to seize the first he could grasp, I was walking with Mordaunt, and while I bewailed your misfortune, I could not help rejoicing at such a magnificent opening



for him, knowing your unbounded influence, and the eclat it would give him to be employed even accidentally by you. Would you believe it, sir, he refused to follow your servant, refused to administer to your relief——”

“Refused?” exclaimed Mr. Goldman, with an air of surprise and displeasure. “This is very unaccountable behaviour. Did he know who I am? Or did he imagine I was some poor wretch, who could not pay him for his services?”

I told him who you were, sir, and that it was a life of no common value that was endangered. But because he had promised a few moments before to prescribe for the wife of a vile drunkard, who with reeling step arrested us in our path, a creature too low to be considered within the pale of humanity, he turned a deaf ear to the tale of your sufferings, and allowed *her* life to outweigh *yours*, in the scale of his judgment.”

“Fool!” exclaimed Mr. Goldman.

“Perhaps he put his promise in the scale to balance the temptation,” said Constance. “Of course he is wealthy, or he would not slight a golden opportunity.”

“Not worth a cent in the world,” answered Wiley, “and, what is more, never will be.”

“Uncle,” said Constance, with a sudden lighting up of her fair, calm face, a splendour, not a glow, “when I tell you what I know of this young Doctor Mordaunt, you will withdraw the opprobrious epithet you have given him. The night of your dreadful accident, I was with poor Kate O’Brien, when he

visited her, and I was struck with the kindness of his manner, and the heartiness of his sympathy. It seemed to me that he was skilful, and that he felt as much interest in her recovery as if a great reward were to be his. Kate O’Brien, sir,” added she, looking toward Wiley, with a glance he could not understand, “was a favourite servant of my mother’s. My mother had her from childhood in her household, and loved her almost as her child. She was faithful, gentle, and affectionate. Ever since her unfortunate marriage she has lived near us, an object of interest and compassion. She was worthy of the profoundest pity, whatever may be said of her miserable husband. That Doctor Mordaunt should conscientiously adhere to his promise of visiting the poor and lowly, in the face of a strong temptation, is, I think, a noble instance of generosity and self-sacrifice. I esteemed him before—I honour him now.”

“And what is this young doctor to you, that you defend him so warmly, Constance?” cried her uncle, looking suspiciously on her shining countenance, for it literally shone with moral admiration.

“To me, nothing, uncle; but the cause is every thing.”

“What cause?”

“The cause of truth, and justice, and humanity. I thought if you and Mr. Wiley understood the circumstances which I have related, they would vindicate Dr. Mordaunt from the charges of Quixotism and folly. Uncle, *you* was attached to poor Kate—I was summoned to your bed of agony—her brutal husband



forsook her—this young man remained with her till she died. Even then, he watched by her lonely corse. Hannah found him guarding it, as a sacred trust——”

Constance paused. She had spoken with more energy than she was aware of, and a faint colour dawned perceptibly on her alabaster cheek.

Wiley, exasperated to find that, instead of lowering Mordaunt, he had only exalted him in her estimation, rose to depart. Constance drew a sigh of relief as the door closed on his departing figure. Mr. Goldman looked anxious and irritated.

“You have displeased him, Constance.”

“I care not, uncle. His displeasure or approbation are alike to me.”

“He loves you. He has wealth and talents and a rising reputation. I do not like to see you blind to his merits, and infatuated by those of a poor stranger. I wish to speak to you openly, Constance. I do not think I shall ever recover from the shock my constitution has received. It is time that I should transfer my guardianship to another. Wiley is rich himself, and cannot be allured by your fortune. His attachment is disinterested and sincere, yet he has sufficient worldly wisdom to watch over your property, and his sobriety, prudence, and good sense, will secure your domestic happiness. I like Wiley. I wish you to marry him.”

“I do not like him, uncle. I do not wish to marry him, or any one else. His worldly wisdom chills the very atmosphere I breathe. If I ever do marry, it shall not be a man of dollars and cents, a man

without one warm and generous affection, one noble, magnanimous feeling. Kate O'Brien, the drunkard's wife, was not more worthy of pity than I should be. Her heart was crushed—mine would be frozen.”

“Constance,” said her uncle, suddenly raising himself on one elbow, then falling back with a groan of pain, “if you have conceived a sudden passion for this young doctor, I will never countenance it; I warn you against this folly. It shall be blasted in the very bud.”

“Oh! uncle, have you so poor an opinion of me as to believe me incapable of an unselfish, generous sentiment? I am not one to be governed by the impulse of passion. You know I am not. I am called the snow-maiden, because I am deemed so cold and unimpressible. I do feel interested in this young physician, for he has shown himself magnanimous and strong to resist temptation. A noble spirit struggling with destiny is worthy of admiration. I would give worlds to hold out to him a helping hand. I would give any thing that I were a man, that I could offer him a brother's aid, a friend's assistance. I feel guilty in the possession of wealth, so far beyond my want, when it might serve as a golden ladder, on which a great soul could mount to the heights of honour and distinction.”

“You are a strange girl, Constance. I do not understand you,” cried her uncle, feeling through the icy coldness of his nature, in spite of his own will, the penetrative sun-rays of her own philanthropy. He said he could not understand her, but he did

in some measure. He understood her enough to know that she was misled by no girlish fancy, no unmaidenly passion, but actuated by a high and holy benevolence. He listened to her with more patience, on that couch of suffering, to which she had been a waiting, ministering angel, than he would have done in his days of health and ease.

"Uncle," she added, fixing her clear, serene eyes on his face, and taking his thin hand in the soft palms of hers, "you are a man, and can do what I cannot. You are rich—one of the stewards of God's gold. You can take this young man by the hand and lift him above the influences of poverty, so chilling and depressing to the young and ambitious mind. You said this morning that you did not like Doctor Lewis, that he was careless and indifferent, that he would not listen to your complaints, and seemed to think you had no right to make them."

"Yes, I did say so," interrupted Mr. Goldman, "and I say so again. He never stays with me longer than three minutes, treats me like a common patient."

"He has too many patients, uncle. You are of no consequence to him. Your money is no more to him than any other man's. If you should employ this young doctor, he would be grateful and attentive. You would have the satisfaction of feeling that you were doing him a favour, perhaps laying the foundation of his future eminence. You would be the honoured patron of youthful talent and now unknown worth. You would exult in your own

works. O! uncle, it is not what we do for ourselves, but others, that is written in the Book of Life."

"You say he was very kind to poor Kate?"

"Oh! so kind and compassionate! No brother could have been kinder."

"What would Doctor Lewis say?"

"I think he would rejoice, for the sake of the young man. He is too eminent in his profession to indulge in the meanness of jealousy."

"What will Wiley say?"

"Wiley! Let him say what he pleases. He is envious, and I despise him. He is malicious, and I dislike him. He is cold-hearted, and I shun him. He is avaricious, and cares not for me, but my wealth. Believe me, uncle, he is unworthy of your confidence. The lips that, cold and sarcastic, can breathe the venom of slander on an absent brother, never shall address the words of love to me."

"Brother?"

"All mankind are brothers, uncle. O! I feel the chain that binds me to my race. I cannot bear to think that mine should be made of links of gold, and others of galling iron. There will come a day of great equality, uncle. Blessed are those who labour in this world to establish the equilibrium here, which will settle at last on the meeting waves of the great human mind."

Mr. Goldman cast a look of perplexity and admiration on his niece. He could not follow the divine aspirations of her spirit. He even felt awe in her presence. She seemed scarcely of the earth, earthy.

How came this young girl by these holy sentiments, surrounded by such worldly influences? Cast in the fiery furnace of temptation, with the dangerous gifts of beauty, wealth, and genius, how is it that she walked unscathed 'mid the scorching flames, serene and unmoved? Was it that one in the likeness of the Son of God walked with her, as he did with the children of Israel, and disarmed the elements of the world of their destroying power?

"How shall I send for this young doctor?" suddenly asked Mr. Goldman. "Do you know where he resides?"

"We have a *Directory*. I will get it.

Constance sought the book, and immediately ascertained the location of the young physician.

"I will try him, Constance. If I do not like him, I shall dismiss him. Remember, it is only an experiment."

"Certainly, dear uncle. I ask no more. Thank you a thousand times for this kind concession. It is good, it is noble of you. If you find him unskillful, it will be your duty to withdraw your influence, for life is too precious to be lightly dealt with, and yours most of all. Good-night."

She bent and kissed the forehead of her uncle with unusual tenderness. He drew her gently nearer and nearer, till she was rested against his heart. He folded his uninjured arm around her, and laid his hand on her smooth, soft hair.

"Constance," said he, "you are a good girl—too good for this world. I wish there were more like

you. It is very strange, when talking with Wiley, I feel as hard and worldly as he seems to be. When listening to you, I seem a different being. The monitor within responds to your sweet accents. When I mingled with the world, every thing around me wore a bright metallic glare. I found myself valued for my wealth, and I took a pride in its possession. Why should I not glory in what gave me power and influence? Since I have been confined to this couch, and when I am alone with you, my better nature rises and sometimes triumphs. Good-night. God bless you, Constance."

"And you too, dear uncle."

A tear, which glittered on the fringed curtain of her eyes, fell on the cheek of the invalid, as she turned from the couch. It was only deep emotion that could draw tears from the eyes of Constance. Her feelings were not upon the surface. They were far down in the "sunless retreats of the ocean" of thought.

The next day, when Doctor Lewis called, Constance perceived a shade of embarrassment on her uncle's countenance, and she hastened to relieve him.

"Doctor Lewis," said she, as he turned hastily to the door, "I will not detain you long. It will give you neither disappointment or displeasure if uncle should free you from your attendance on him? Thanks to your skill, he is no longer in danger. There is a promising young physician whom he wishes to patronize. His name is Mordaunt. Has he your permission to do so?"

"Certainly," he replied, with a look of mingled

pleasure and surprise. "I like your frankness. I have heard of this young man. He *is* promising. I am glad to hear of his good fortune."

His countenance expressed more than his words; but Constance did not blush or cast down her eyes. She related in a few words all that she knew of Mordaunt, and that it was owing to her persuasions that her uncle had been induced to employ him.

The simplicity and frankness of her manner convinced the doctor of the purity and elevation of her motives. He was not a cold, unfeeling man. He had not time to express his feelings. The burden of a great responsibility rested upon him, and it made him grave and thoughtful. If he made hurried calls at the rich man's bedside, where his attentions were needed least of all, he often stayed hours in the hovels of the poor. Nothing rejoiced him more than to hear of the rising fame of some young brother in the practice, but he had not time to exert himself for their interests. He had met Mordaunt a short time before, in the suburbs of the city, at the house of a poor German, and he was much pleased with the young man. So he told Constance, and a smile of approbation illumined his countenance as he did so.

"When I was a young man," said he, laying his hand on the latch, "I had many a hard struggle with the world. I know how to sympathize with these young wrestlers. Tell Doctor Mordaunt so, and tell him to call and see me. I shall be glad to know him better."

And he did know him better, and became his firm

friend and disinterested counsellor. And Mr. Goldman was charmed with the young physician, and sounded his praises in every ear.

Mordaunt had indeed cast his bread upon the waters when he visited the dying wife of the drunkard, and gave away his only dollar in the hope of stimulating her exhausted energies. He did not know, when he entered that wretched abode, that there sat the angel who was to stir the stagnant waters of his life. But it was even so.

Now, he knew that he was indebted to Constance for the sudden flow of prosperity that came rolling in the dry and sandy channel of poverty; for the dawning sunshine that shone on the night-cloud of despondency; for the glorious hope of future distinction that now animated his being. He was not vain, and never believed for a moment that personal admiration for himself had prompted the generous interposition of Constance in his behalf. Neither did he impute it to compassion—that would have humiliated him—but to a just appreciation of his character, learned by that intuition of woman's heart which the philosopher admits, though he cannot explain.

Mordaunt had an exalted estimate of woman. He adored his mother, and dearly loved his gentle sister (for he had a mother and sister, who dwelt far away, in a sweet country village), and in every lovely young female he recognized a sister's form. For Constance he felt an admiration so chastened by reverence, it was less like the feeling that youth and beauty inspires than what the worshipper feels for his guardian

saint. It was not love, for she indeed seemed the *snow-maiden*—too pure and too cold to be warmed by the breath of human passion. He experienced in her presence a feeling of divine repose, a kind of moonlight quietude; for such was her exquisite purity, her holy spirituality, that she diffused around her a kind of silvery brightness that threw a soft, illusive charm on all within the sphere of her influence.

Mordaunt's practice was now rapidly extending among the rich and influential, among those who could appreciate his merits, as well as reward his services. He no longer looked with anxious eye on the sleeve of his coat, or the rim of his hat. He could afford to buy new ones. He was no longer poor, no longer unknown. His mind, liberated from the iron fetters of poverty, and unchilled by the vapours of obscurity, was conscious of an expansion, a warmth, an elevation unknown before. He became strongly attached to Doctor Lewis, who, in his now familiar intercourse with the young man, displayed a geniality of feeling, more winning from the contrast with the prevailing reserve and dignity of his character.

Mordaunt occasionally met Wiley, in whose breast the gall of jealousy was added to the venom of envy. Himself the now rejected lover of Constance, he hated the man who, he believed, had rivalled him in her affections. He did not discontinue his visits at Mr. Goldman's. He asked to retain the privileges of a friend, though denied far dearer rights. He wanted to watch the progress of Mordaunt, and, if possible, undermine the stately fabric of his growing fame.

"Every man," said he, "has some weak, vulnerable point, some spot that the Styx of Stoicism has not bathed. Mordaunt is proud. Let the barbed arrow pierce him through his pride, and the wound will prey upon his life."

The soul of Mordaunt had a vulnerable spot, but it was one of which Wiley never dreamed, a spot where the arrow would indeed penetrate deep as the core of life. But time had folded its layers thickly over it, and the man at times forgot what had well nigh maddened the boy.

The age of a tree is known by the consecutive circles that are formed round the heart of the trunk, and it takes many a stroke of the sharpest axe to reach that guarded part.

Thus, year after year had wrapped round the *quicks* of Mordaunt's heart a deeper coating, rendering it more inaccessible to external injury. He was far removed from the associations of the past, and on that *one subject* the lips of memory were hermetically sealed.

One evening, Doctor Lewis came into his office at a late hour. Wiley was sitting there, leaning back against the wall, on the back-ground of a dark cloak, so that his figure was not at first distinguishable. Mordaunt was in an abstracted mood, and apparently forgetful of the presence of one whom his nature avoided with a strong, electric repulsion.

"Come to my office, Mordaunt," said Doctor Lewis, laying his hand familiarly on his shoulder; "I have a glorious subject—the criminal who was executed this

morning. He is certainly one of the noblest specimens of humanity, as far as the outward man is concerned, I have ever seen."

An expression of sickening horror passed over Mordaunt's countenance. He shrunk involuntarily from the hand laid in kindness upon him. Doctor Lewis beheld him with surprise and disappointment.

"I thought you would welcome such an opportunity," said he, rather coldly. "You surely must have conquered ere this that morbid sensibility that recoils from an act which the wants of science demand, which philanthropy sanctions and religion approves. The man who has violated the laws of God makes an expiation greater than his life, when he yields his body to the scalpel, which explores the winding mysteries of vitality. Living he may be the scourge, dead, the benefactor of mankind."

"Doctor," replied Mordaunt, and his usually sunny eye was darkened and overcast, "I would far rather disturb the awful slumbers of the grave than touch the poor victim of man's unrighteous judgment. He was condemned and executed on circumstantial evidence alone. Such a decision is not lawful. It is often murder of the most cruel, deliberate kind. I believe him innocent. I would not make a sacrifice of his body to save my own from burning flames."

Wiley leaned forward from his darkened corner and gazed with intense curiosity on the pale and excited face of Mordaunt. Why should he feel so painful an interest in the fate of a nameless male-

factor? What was his guilt or innocence to him? It was not merely abstract sympathy with his race which could extinguish the colour of his cheek, and quench so suddenly the light of his eye.

Wiley, the naturally cold and envious, the deliberately jealous and now malignant Wiley, watched his victim with feline subtlety and dissimulation. He had discovered a wire which communicated with the vital, *vulnerable* part he had been so long seeking. And he twisted and twisted it round the screw of memory, ready to draw it and tug at it, till the heart's blood came oozing, drop by drop, exposing the inner wound.

"I will not urge you to-night," said Doctor Lewis, taking leave of Mordaunt with a serious kindness of manner, which made the young man grasp his hand with unconscious warmth. "I see you are nervous, and I fear seriously indisposed. We cannot always command our will, and every one, I believe, has some strange, unaccountable weakness, which has its ebbs and flows like the moon-ruled tide."

"I fear you think me weak, doctor," replied Mordaunt, "but do not judge me without a hearing. I will not detain you now. Some time, when you are entirely at leisure, I will tell you something of the history of my early life. A terrible shock, received in childhood, will make the electric chord vibrate in long, after years."

When Doctor Lewis had left the office, Mordaunt resumed his seat, and leaning his elbows on the table,

pressed his forehead upon his hand, bending his head so that his hair fell in thick masses over his brow. There was perfect silence in the apartment. The lamp-light fell with a strong glare on the ghastly framework of life gleaming cold and white in its dim recess, and threw the shadow of Mordaunt darkly on the floor.

Wiley looked at the shadow and smiled, then softly rising, he approached the young physician, and said, in his usual cool, passionless tone—

"You do not seem well to-night, Mordaunt. Can I do any thing for you?"

"No, sir," replied Mordaunt haughtily. Then, with a sudden change of voice, he added—"Pardon me, I thought you had left me."

"I am glad you refused to accompany Doctor Lewis," said Wiley. I have more sympathy with your scrupulous humanity than with his cold, abstract love of science."

"I have not been actuated by humanity," said Mordaunt, hastily. "I will not accept unmerited commendation, if *you* consider it such. But *I* do not. I look upon Doctor Lewis as the high-priest of humanity. He is a votary of science only as he is a lover of mankind."

"Why did you tell him that you would not make a sacrifice of the body of that man, believing him innocent, to save your own from consuming fire?"

"Because," replied the young man with energy, "he probably has friends, who are watching with agonizing anxiety to pay to his poor remains those

holy rites immemorial time has hallowed. His blackened name, his awful doom, the rope, the scaffold, and the hangman's gripe cannot divorce the victim from their affections and sympathies. The sanctity of a Christian burial heals the gaping wound caused by a violent and ignominious death. Who would rob the wretched survivors of so poor a consolation? Who would deprive them of a home for their bitter tears? A turf to make green with the dew of sorrow? Those who die in the arms of their kindred, who are laid quietly and reverently in their six-feet bed of earth, with the balm of prayer and praise, what matters it to them if their sanctified dust be made to add to the glory of science and the good of man? What matters it to them, whether their bones moulder beneath the clods of the valley, or bleach in the sunshine of heaven? Friends never go to pierce into the mystery of the charnel-house. Affection shrinks back from its cold threshold. The wreath may hang on the marble urn—the tablet gleam with golden characters. Love, sorrow, memory ask no more."

"Some of his kindred have died upon the scaffold," said Wiley to himself, passing his hand over his eyes to hide the triumphant malice of their beams. "I know it as well as if I had seen their bodies swinging between heaven and earth. Constance shall know it, too."

"For myself," continued Mordaunt, in a still more excited tone, "I care not what becomes of this clay temple of mine when the indwelling Deity is departed. Earth, fire, flood may claim their own, for it will re-



solve at last into its original elements. The soul, the enfranchised angel, what cares it for the poor remnant, the broken chains, the badges of sorrow and slavery it leaves behind?"

We will leave Mordaunt to his own reflections; for when the door closed on Wiley, he suddenly extinguished his lamp and wrapped himself in darkness, as with a mantle. The memories of childhood rolled back in a black flood, lashed into billows, drowning the joys of the present, the hopes of the future; even the serene and holy light of the *Evening Star* could not disperse the thick gloom that followed in the wake of those cold waters. It only made their shadows more appalling. The dark hour was on him, the eclipse of the soul, for the first time since the evening which introduced him to Constance Goldman.

Yes, every mortal that has a soul to feel, has their dark hours. Sometimes the night-cloud comes we know not whence, and goes we know not whither. Sometimes it is the shadow of a mighty sorrow, a sorrow rising gravely and gloomily above the landscape of life—still existing, though years may have stretched their space between.

Mordaunt's own nature was too bright and sunny for that mysterious, spirit-woe so many are doomed to feel; but the dark mountain, whose shade had fallen on the green fields and flowery vales of childhood, still loomed upon his sight, through the dimness of distance and the mists of time.

Not many days after the scene we have described in Mordaunt's office, he was met by Wiley at the house of Mr. Goldman, who was still an invalid. Wiley exerted himself more than usual to shine in the conversation that evening, and his apparent warmth of feeling nearly surprised Mordaunt into an inward acknowledgement that he had wronged this man's nature; that it might possess some of the finer traits hitherto lying beneath or beyond the observation of the world. By imperceptible degrees, and with consummate art, he led the conversation through many tributary streams into the channel that suited his purpose.

Pride of birth and station had been touched upon lightly, and Wiley had maintained that the aristocracy of intellect was the only true aristocracy—the one that would, sooner or later, be universally acknowledged and respected. There was something noble, he said, in the efforts of a young man to rise above the misfortunes of his early life. But no honest man should be ashamed of his parentage.

To his propositions, deferentially stated, and skillfully reasoned, he gained the assent of even the aristocratic Mr. Goldman.

"But," said Wiley, glancing keenly towards Mordaunt, "suppose that in addition to his poverty, a dark stain rested on the family of a young man, and, concealing all knowledge of the circumstances of his early history, he should strive to ingratiate himself into the favour of his superiors, and attain their skirts with the blackness that clung to his own."



"I know such an one," he continued, "who even aspires to the hand of a young lady far above him. He has partially succeeded in impressing her with the belief that he is a man of noble sentiments and qualities, that his impulses and aspirations are like her own, that his genius, talents, and acquirements are a fair offset to her possessions and proud name, and that an alliance with him would secure to her happiness and peace. He hides from her his history, which he would fain bury in the oblivion of the past; he hides from her the truth that his name would bring dishonour upon her and those connected with her by the dearest ties; he hides from her that he is seeking this marriage to gild over that name that has been stained with a dreadful crime; in short, he hides from her the fact that his own father perished ignominiously upon the scaffold! Is this honourable?"

It was not till after the words died away that the spirit felt their reptile influence.

Constance had answered—"No, it is not honourable," before this influence was perceptible on herself. She observed the eye of Wiley fixed steadily on Mordaunt, who was seated at her side, and an impulse which she could not resist urged her to turn and look upon him.

As she did so, she met his glance, and her own was riveted, as by fascination. Never had she seen the face of man of such marble pallor. Never had she witnessed such an expression of sternness and despair on any human countenance. And yet, flashing through this sternness and despair there was a sud-

denly kindled, burning ray, quick, bright and fierce, as the meteor of a dark night. In that momentary communion of glances, a history was revealed which volumes might not contain.

You have seen the lightning instantaneously opening the gates of midnight, while stretching beyond seemed interminable fiery streets, glimpses of the eternal land. So oftentimes the lightning of strong emotion discloses the mysterious depths of the soul, "that city of our God," whose length and breadth no gauger's wand has ever measured.

For one moment the face of Constance was bloodless as his own, then, quickly and gushingly as the blood follows the stroke of the lancet, the warm current rushed over her cheek and brow. It was like the breaking up of an ice-bound stream, when the waves leap from their prison-bonds, or rather (with reverence we use the comparison), like the miracle of Cana, when the hueless water "owned its God and blushed."

Mr. Goldman, whose easy chair was placed a little back from the group, and who beheld not the emotions we have described, repeated with emphasis the words of Constance—

"No, it is not honourable. It is not pardonable. I could pity, nay, esteem the young man who, making no secret of his misfortune, endeavoured to make himself an unblemished fame. But I never would forgive the one who deceived my confidence and tried to introduce into my family a dishonoured name. Who is the young man of whom you are speaking?"

"I, sir, am that unfortunate man," exclaimed Mordaunt, to the astonishment of Wiley, rising from his seat, and turning towards Mr. Goldman; "but I have never sought to deceive the confidence of my friends. I have merely been silent on a misfortune for which sympathy has no balm, and friendship no relief. I acknowledge that in scenes far from my native home I have endeavoured to forget that I bore a dishonoured name, and to make for myself an irreproachable reputation. But it was for no foul, deliberate crime that my unhappy parent was doomed to a death of shame. The victim of a dark and inscrutable destiny, he left on the minds of all who knew him a conviction of his innocence as clear and ineffaceable as if the testimony were written with a diamond pen on a tablet of crystal.

"This gentleman, with a penetration that does more honour to his head than his heart, has discovered the secret, which I have guarded from no mean or unworthy motives. Why he has taken this opportunity to disclose it, in a manner the tortures of the inquisition could not have surpassed, he alone knows."

"I mentioned no names," cried Wiley, evidently disconcerted by the undaunted frankness of Mordaunt; "if conscience has directed the application, I neither claim the merit nor assume the blame."

"Really, gentlemen, this is a most extraordinary disclosure," said Mr. Goldman, turning pale from the excitement of his feelings, "I know not when my nerves have received so sudden and severe a shock. Doctor Mordaunt, I have never met with a young gentleman whom I have esteemed more, but these un-

fortunate circumstances—you should have made them known to me sooner. I am placed in a very distressing position."

Here he put his hand to his head with an air of such pain and embarrassment that Constance immediately saturated her handkerchief with cologne and bathed his forehead. She was glad of something to do in a moment of such overwhelming emotion.

"Let me relieve you of the distress which my presence occasions you, sir," cried Mordaunt. But before I withdraw I would thank you for all past kindness and confidence. I rejoice in the conviction that I have not forfeited either by any conduct of my own. Should you consider me responsible for an event which occurred in my early childhood, and which no acts of my manhood could change, and exclude me hereafter from your friendship and esteem, I must bow to a decision whose justice nevertheless reason and religion could never admit. Farewell, sir. I wish you to reflect calmly on this question, and whatever be the result, gratitude for the past will be permanent as my life."

With a respectful bow to Mr. Goldman, who did not attempt to reply, and another still lower to Constance, Mordaunt passed from the room without directing a glance at Wiley.

With slow steps he traversed the long passage, walking over prostrate pillars of moonshine, white and gleaming as marble, thinking that of materials as ghostly and unsubstantial his life-temple must be built.

As he opened the door, a silver scaffold was plainly

defined upon the floor. He shuddered to see his thoughts thus shaping themselves in the night-glory, when he was arrested by a touch so light as to be almost impalpable. At first he imagined that the moonbeams were gleaming on his arm in the form of a fair and delicate hand, for there it was on the dark sleeve of his coat, just as he had seen it months before in Kate O'Brien's cottage. He turned and beheld the celestial countenance of Constance so near that her breath sighed upon his cheek.

"Constance!" he exclaimed.

It was the first time he had ever addressed her thus. It was strange that while the revelation just made seemed to divorce him from mankind, it drew him irresistibly closer toward her. At any other moment he would have thought it presumption to have called her by her own noble and appropriate Christian name.

"Come into the conservatory a few moments," said she, "unless you are willing to throw aside a friend as lightly as the flower your foot is now crushing."

A flower had fallen from the bosom of Constance under the feet of Mordaunt, who was unconsciously grinding it in the dust.

"I hope this is not prophetic," cried Constance in a very low voice, looking on the defaced and mangled blossom.

Mordaunt followed the steps of Constance, like a man walking in a dream, back through the passage, out into the still splendour of the night, down the granite stairs, till he found himself in a grotto, in the

centre of which a beautiful fountain was throwing up its sparkling jets, which descended in the form of a weeping willow, with crystal boughs dropping pearly tears in a marble reservoir.

Imagination could not conceive a more enchanting spot than this "Fairy's Grotto," as Constance named it.

When her uncle erected the magnificent mansion which he now occupied, he allowed *her* taste to luxuriate there in all the prodigality of nature and all the refinement of art. Mordaunt had been admitted before to this lovely retreat, and he was familiar with all its beauties, but now it burst upon him with a loveliness that seemed more than earthly. The rich aroma of the flowers pressed with languishing sweetness on his senses, and the soft, monotonous murmur of the falling fountain mingled with the sad, minor tones of his own spirit, making a mournful but divine harmony.

They sat down on a circular seat which surrounded the basin, and watched in silence the diamond shower sparkling in the moonlight that turned every drop into a prism, reflecting its radiance. Some of the most beautiful nymphs of mythology stood within the shade of the grotto, and received eternal baptism from the spray. There was one of the daughters of Danaus, holding up her bottomless vase to catch the fountain's waters, hope struggling with despair on her beautiful features, the hope that her expiatory task might yet be accomplished. A lovely Bacchante lifted her ivy-crowned brow and caught a silver

crown upon its leaves. A Flora, the embodiment of youthful beauty and grace, was represented as scattering flowers on the dewy grass, and all these charming classical figures were reflected in a mirror which constituted a wall on one side, and the willowy fountain with its diamond branches was reflected there also, and two other figures seated side by side cast their images on the illuminated sheet of crystal, which multiplied, as if by enchantment, the fairy scene.

Constance had thrown around her a light scarf, very airy in texture, but its colour was silver gray, and Mordaunt thought once more of the *Evening Star*. But now its rays seemed setting instead of rising on the horizon of his destiny.

"I thank you for this last act of kindness and condescension," said Mordaunt, regretting the next moment that he had spoken at all, for it seemed sacrilege to break the silence, or rather the music, of the hour. "But is it not cruel to bring me here, that I may feel the more fully and deeply what I fear I have for ever lost?"

"Why should any blessing, yours either by possession or in reversion, be lost to you now?" asked Constance.

"You know the curse that clings to me, and yet ask why?"

"I have learned your misfortunes, and, though nobly sustained as they have hitherto been, they will turn to blessings at last. I rejoice that you had the moral courage to avow yourself the object of Wiley's dark insinuations. He is already baffled, and his malice

will recoil on himself. And do you know me so little as to believe that the revelations of this night can affect my esteem for you—that I could be so unjust, so cowardly, and unkind—that I could visit on the innocent the crime of the guilty, even if the guilt exist? But I have faith in your father's innocence, because you are his son. I have faith that it will yet be made known to the world, dark as is the cloud which now rests upon it."

"Ten thousand blessings for this sublime faith," exclaimed Mordaunt, his countenance kindling with inspiration, "and ten thousand blessings for the confidence which has not been shaken by this sudden blow. I feel myself worthy of it, and yet I would not take advantage of it and expose you to the malicious observations of the world. Wiley will blazon abroad the stigma which brands my name. By association, your own will become contaminated. Your uncle will sacrifice me to the god of public opinion. He has not the moral strength to resist its influence. I should expose you to his displeasure, and bring dissension into a now harmonious household."

"I should be unworthy of the blessings you have just breathed upon me, if I were not willing to brave the evils you are bringing in such dread array before me. O, if you knew how little I care for the opinion of the world, when conscious of right in my own heart, you would feel how inefficient were your arguments, how sophistical your reasoning. The world, as it is called, one true friend would outweigh a hundred-fold in my estimation."

"For my own safety, Constance, then be it. To wish to be more than a friend to you now would be the madness of presumption, and yet so madly presumptuous I am. Nay, so ungrateful, that the friendship which a short time ago I valued as the most precious gift of heaven, would now seem a cake of stone to the prayer of a craving, hungry heart. No," added he, with increasing excitement, "I cannot accept intercourse on such cold terms. I dare not ask it on any other. Therefore, I must leave you. I knew there was a gulf between us, but I would not see it; I made a bridge of flowers over it, and tried to forget that there was an abyss beneath. Wiley has torn away the frail arch. God forgive him—I fear I never can."

"You murmur at a cake of stone," said Constance, and again the crimson under-current so lately liberated from restraint sent its waves to her cheek, "yet you have never asked for bread."

And the reserved, nun-like Constance uttered this to the man whose father had perished on the scaffold, and whose name was in consequence irretrievably dishonoured. Yes, and far more, for they sat for hours in that fairy grotto, till

"Like holy revealings  
From innermost shrines came the light of their feelings."

Mordaunt related all his past history, including the awful tragedy of his father's death. He was then a mere boy, but he remembered well his mother's agony and his sister's despair. He remembered well the last

prison-scene, when his father, almost crushing him in his arms, baptized him with tears of blood, as it were, declaring his innocence in the name of that God in whose presence he was about to appear. Years of darkness followed, but light dawned at last. His mother was a brave, Christian woman, and grief did not crush her. She lived for her children. In him, the jubilant spirit of youth at last rose above the gloomy past, that past which began to appear as a frightful dream. Amid new scenes, surrounded with new associations, he ceased to dwell upon it, and, if the shadow intruded, he resolutely dispelled it. There came, however, a time when it rolled down upon him with the blackness of a thunder-storm, and he bowed beneath its weight. It was the night when Doctor Lewis entered his office, and Wiley was witness of emotions his malice too well interpreted.

"I have explained every thing to Doctor Lewis," said Mordaunt, "and he is more than ever my friend. He has even offered me a partnership in his practice, and given me the most earnest advice to remain."

"Remain!" repeated Constance. "Surely, you have not thought of leaving us?"

"Since I have discovered that I have an enemy, the very air I breathe seems contaminated. But now I feel that I can triumph over his malice. With the hopes that now animate me, I could face an opposing world. At this moment I would scarcely rend from my life's history its darkened leaf, for on its black tablet I read in golden characters your confidence and faith. No! welcome the shame, since it is the back-

ground of glory. Welcome the gross, for the love-crown that glitters in the future!"

Constance Goldman did not feel as if she had made any sacrifice in pledging her faith to Mordaunt. She believed herself the winner of a noble prize in a heart like his. Never, perhaps, had a young and inexperienced girl a truer estimate of life. A brotherless, sisterless orphan, nature had opened few channels in which her affections could flow. There was nothing in her uncle's character to inspire the love and reverence she longed to bestow on some legitimate object. She had met no one in the circles of wealth and fashion in whom she felt the slightest interest. Of a deeply religious temperament, her heart lifted itself toward God with a fervour and devotion unchecked by any earthly idol. In every son and daughter of sorrow she saw a brother and sister to whom God had appointed her a ministering spirit. So she went about doing good, surrounded by a halo of vestal purity, which made her inapproachable as she was lovely. From the first moment she beheld Mordaunt in the cottage of poor Kate O'Brien, she felt his superiority to his kind; on every succeeding interview she more and more esteemed and honoured him; but it was not till this evening, when, with the quickness of a woman's perception, she read that he was the object of Wiley's malice, and at the same time had a vivid insight into *his* heart, that her own was awakened; and its awakening was like the sun-burst of a summer's day after a morning of clouds. What if his father's name was a heritage of ignominy? She cared not, since

he was pure, and of spotless fame. Was he not more noble, more glorious in his own underived excellence?

When Mordaunt left the grotto, the moon had set, and the silver had faded from the willow's watery boughs. But clear and serene and resplendent shone the *Evening Star* above his head.

On his homeward way he reflected on his destiny, and its whole aspect seemed changed. Even the scaffold had lost its ignominy, and was exalted to the grandeur of the cross. He wondered that he had not thought of it more as the theme of an incarnate Deity—the altar of a god-like sacrifice.

All the influence of Constance was lost upon her uncle in reference to Mordaunt. He refused to listen to her persuasions, to her earnest exhortations that he would take a noble stand above the prejudices of the vulgar and the passions of the proud. Mordaunt, the son of an executed criminal, should never more be an inmate of his house, an attendant on his person. He wished him no evil, he even forgave him the deception he had practiced, but all intercourse must cease. Poverty could be forgiven, but disgrace, never!

Constance and Mordaunt both had too lofty a sense of propriety to think of clandestine meetings. She resolved to wait till the time of her majority, and then, being in possession of her fortune, and freed from the legal authority of a guardian, she could openly avow and glory in her choice.

In the meantime, the malicious tongue of Wiley was not silent. The history of Mordaunt became the

topic of the day, and wherever he went the eye of curiosity followed him. Many turned away coldly who had formerly smiled, and some who had just begun to smile, frowned, and withdrew their patronage. The artful misrepresentations of Wiley, uttered without any apparent venom or design, were the trail of the serpent, blighting the flowers of confidence and esteem.

The young physician had, however, one pillar to lean upon, in the firm friendship of Doctor Lewis, firm as the granite, and imperishable as gold. While his proud spirit writhed in secret at the undeserved obloquy darkening his young renown, he thought of the love of Constance, the esteem of Doctor Lewis, and felt himself rich beyond the common hopes of man.

"Be strong, be patient," said this excellent friend; "be self-reliant and hopeful. It is hardly within the bounds of possibility that your father's memory will ever be cleared of the stain that rests upon it. But the cloud will in time roll away from yourself. It is only what is inherent that is permanent."

"I have always had a hope so strong as to assume the character of certainty," replied Mordaunt, "that God would bring about a revelation which would surround my father's memory with the halo of martyrdom. I tremble when I hear of the confessions of dying criminals—tremble with a vague expectation of discovering the actual murderer, in whose stead the innocent and righteous was doomed to suffer."

"It may be," said the doctor, "but after the lapse

of so many years, it would be little short of the miraculous. We must wait for the great day of revealing, when mere circumstantial evidence will be annihilated by the consuming fires of truth.

One night, as Mordaunt was returning with Doctor Lewis from a professional visit, and passing through a cross street, peopled by poverty and vice, he was arrested by a tumult on the side-walk. Lights were gleaming near the door of a low building, and several figures were rushing out in different directions. One came in violent contact with Mordaunt, at the imminent risk of prostrating him on the pavement.

"What is the matter?" he exclaimed. "What is the cause of this violent tumult?"

"A man is bleeding to death!" cried several voices, clamorously. "Can any one tell us where to find a doctor, a surgeon? He can't live ten minutes, at this rate."

"Show us the way," said Doctor Lewis. "Here are two doctors at once."

The next moment, forcing their way through the crowd, they stood in the presence of the bleeding man, and, accustomed as they were to every form of suffering and death, they recoiled with involuntary horror from the spectacle before them. He lay extended on his back, on the bare floor, weltering in his blood. He lay in a crimson pool, and the dark red tide was still gushing from his right arm, like water from a fountain.

"What is the meaning of this?" said Doctor Lewis,

even his iron nerves vibrating painfully as he gazed upon him.

"Nothing but a fight," answered a ruffianly-looking bystander. "The man that cut him ran off when he saw him bleed so dreadfully."

"Nothing but a fight!" repeated Doctor Lewis, sternly; "why he must have cut an artery. 'Tis a life-stroke."

A knife dabbled in blood lay dripping on the floor. Doctor Lewis threw off his coat, seized the knife, and stepping, almost wading into the bloody pool, he stooped down and gashed open the sleeve of the wounded man. To tie up a severed artery is a difficult and dangerous operation, but with a firm yet gentle touch he drew together the issues of life, till the living fibres turned, the valves of the fountain closed, and the victim was saved from immediate death.

"You are not used to such bloody work," said Doctor Lewis, looking at his own and Mordaunt's ensanguined hands, after they had laid their patient on a bed, in the adjoining room, and administered the customary restoratives. "We might be taken for murderers, indeed," added he, holding out his arms, whose linen covering of dazzling white was reddened with the scarlet dye of murder.

Mordaunt turned deadly pale. He remembered his father, and the evidence that stained a spotless life.

"He cannot live," said Doctor Lewis. "Such rills of blood as have flowed from his arteries are enough

to exhaust the energies of the strongest life. And why should we wish him to live, only to expend the wonderful muscular strength which God has given him in scenes of violence and strife? I can read in every line of his strongly-marked, disfigured face, a history of blood and crime."

At length the man opened his eyes, and rolling them round the apartment, they rested on the figures that were seated by the bedside with wonder and terror. He looked upon their grave countenances and bloody arms, and had they been agents of vengeance instead of ministers of mercy, he could not have expressed more wildness of horror in his dim and glassy glance. Mordaunt stood nearest him, his arms folded across his breast, and a dark shade resting upon the sunlight of his eyes. The restless glance of the patient became fixed on his face, and it suddenly flashed, as if from an inward blaze. A hoarse shriek burst from his lips.

"Who are you?" he cried. "How came you here? I'm not dead yet! By the eternal God, I'll not be tormented before my time! Away, I say! How came that blood on your hands? You didn't do it! Hah!"

"Come this side, Mordaunt," said Dr. Lewis, in a low voice. "He seems delirious, and there is something about you that agitates him. I want him to be very quiet."

"Mordaunt, Mordaunt!" groaned the man, "who told you his name?"

Then pausing, he added, in a whisper—



"Fool! he died upon the scaffold!"

Mordaunt grasped the Doctor's arm with spasmodic force. The blood rushed in torrents to his brain, to make room for the wild hope that leaped into his heart.

"Be quiet," said the Doctor, laying his hand on Mordaunt's shoulder, and fixing upon him his commanding eyes. Be quiet. *He may die without confessing.*"

The last words were audible only to the ear of Mordaunt; but, low as they were, they rung through him like a trumpet's blast. He remained silent, while every fibre of his frame quivered with suppressed emotion.

Doctor Lewis bent over the wounded man, and addressed him calmly and deliberately.

"You have but a few hours to live, at the utmost. You are going into the presence of God, a naked, guilty, trembling soul. Your only hope of mercy is in making a full confession of the crimes you have committed. You cannot conceal them. *I* know them. *God* knows them. The assembled universe will know them.

The dying man uttered the most horrible groans; while, as if under the influence of fascination, he kept his lurid, sunken eyes fixed upon the pale and agitated face of Mordaunt.

"I can't die," he murmured; "I hav'n't time to repent. *He* had. Every body that dies upon the scaffold goes to Heaven—don't they? A few hours—how many? Tell me, or, by the Almighty God, I'll curse you with my last breath!"

"You cannot live more than three, perhaps not one," replied the Doctor, with imperturbable composure. "Waste not your breath in idle curses. There was pardon for the dying thief—there may be for you. You cannot bring back the dead; you may justify their memory. For *your* crimes this young man's father perished on the scaffold. Confess it—for, as sure as you die without clearing the innocent, your departing spirit will weave itself a winding-sheet of flames."

"I will confess," he gasped; "but, God of mercy! it is too late—too late."

The Doctor moistened the parched lips of the patient; then, having forced him to swallow a reviving mixture, he drew from his pocket paper and pencil, and seated himself with the gravity of a magistrate by the side of the bed. It was not without many interruptions, incoherent ejaculations, groans of despair, and cries for mercy, that the wretched being, who called himself Leftridge, related what we will endeavour to condense in fewer words.

More than sixteen years previous, Leftridge and Mordaunt (the father of the young physician) met as travellers, in a crowded inn. There was another stranger there, who boasted of the immense quantity of gold in his possession. He looked upon the red wine-cup, and prudence evaporated with its fumes. Leftridge and Mordaunt shared the same room, the same bed. The stranger, with his boasted gold, occupied the next apartment.

Leftridge could not sleep—a demon was at work

in his heart, hissing temptation. He stole from the side of his sleeping companion, on whose placid face the moonbeams were shining, (strange that man can meditate deeds of guilt, in such a holy light!) Mordaunt's dagger, his travelling weapon of defence, lay gleaming on the table, conspicuous for its gilded sheath. Leftridge drew forth the blade, and touched the edge with his cold fingers. The steel seemed to burn into his flesh, chill as it was. A linen handkerchief lay by its side bearing initials *not his own*. He seized it also, and stole with stealthy steps into the adjoining room. So sure was the blow that but one groan broken on the silence of the night, and that groan echoed not beyond the walls of the death-chamber.

The murderer filled his pockets with gold and fled. Mordaunt was arrested as the criminal. His own knife, found in the gaping wound, his own handkerchief, bathed in blood, some of the gold, discovered in his pocket, were circumstantial evidences which no counter testimony outweighed. The absence of Leftridge, who was supposed to have left at early dawn, as travellers often did, excited little remark. Mordaunt was a stranger. So great was the public indignation, it came near setting at defiance the majesty of the law, and condemning him without judge or jury. The sequel of his fate is known to the reader from our previous narrative.

Leftridge wandered from place to place, far from the scene of the two-fold tragedy, spending his ill-gotten gold, and trying to drown in intemperance the un-

quenchable fires of remorse. Providence had brought him, at his last hour, face to face with the son of his victim, thus proving its own retributive justice.

Mordaunt listened to this vindication of his father's memory in breathless emotion, but no vindictive feelings swelled in his bosom. That miserable being, stretched on the very edge of the burning crater of doom, looking into the smoking abyss below, feeling the crumbling earth sinking, giving way beneath—could he look upon him with any emotions save of the deepest compassion? His father had died, sustained by faith and animated by Christian hope. His memory, though stamped with public ignominy, was embalmed by the tears of widowed and filial love. His misfortunes had canonized him. But Leftridge—alas, for the poor wretch! What was left for him but a fearful looking forward to future judgment, and a name steeped in infamy?

Exhausted by the efforts he had made, he lay panting, gasping, a cold and clammy moisture oozing from his cadaverous skin. And so he died.

Doctor Lewis took immediate measures to publish to the world the circumstances, which removed the shadow that envy and malice had rolled over Mordaunt's name. They became the topic of the day, and the young physician was exalted into a hero, the hero-son of a martyr-sire. That very night he wrote to his mother—the next he sought the dwelling of Constance.

"My father's memory is justified," said he, addressing Mr. Goldman; and, notwithstanding the respect

he wished to manifest to the uncle of Constance, his manner was cold and haughty. "Is the social ban removed from his son?"

"I regret exceedingly, Doctor Mordaunt," answered Mr. Goldman, in much embarrassment, "that circumstances have compelled me to put an unnatural restraint upon my feelings. For myself, I could rise above the prejudices of the world; but as the guardian of a young lady of rank and fortune, I have been compelled to be circumspect. We live in a cold and censorious world."

"I am fully aware of that truth, sir," answered Mordaunt, with a slight dash of bitterness in his tone; but the entrance of Constance, now the *Morning Star* of his destiny, dispersed the lingering clouds of haughtiness from his brow, and he remembered nothing but that *her* faith and trust had been the same,

"Through joy and through sorrow, through glory and shame."

Wiley had the audacity to call at his office and offer his congratulations. He extended his hand with the assurance of a welcome guest. Mordaunt folded his arms and drew back with stately reserve.

"You can enter my doors and sit down in my office," said he, with a glance that brought the hot blood to Wiley's usually cold cheek, "for they are not a part of myself; but my hand is my *own*, and never shall be voluntarily given to a man whose heart I know to be destitute of every warm and generous feeling. That I bear no vindictive remembrance of the past, let this action speak."

Taking from his pocket-book a soiled and worn-looking paper, he put it in the hand of Wiley.

"This paper," he added, "relates to yourself. The Stephen Wiley there referred to as the leader of a notorious band of counterfeiterers must be your own father. There are collateral proofs which I can gather up, if you will it, and place in strong array before your eyes. This paper was found upon the person of Leftridge, the murderer, himself one of that lawless band. Doctor Lewis is the only man beside myself acquainted with this disagreeable fact. *He* will never publish it to the world, and I should look upon myself with loathing and scorn, if I could imitate the malice from whose evils I have just been liberated, and seek to cover you with a father's shame. Now your secret is safe. Tear the paper into a thousand pieces, if you will, and let the winds of heaven disperse the relics."

Wiley crushed the paper as if with iron fingers. His lips turned of ashy paleness, while the veins in his forehead swelled and stood out like purple cords. He tried to speak and falsify the evidence of truth, but the words adhered to his palsied tongue. The astounding revelation brought about by such a strange coincidence of circumstances seemed so much like the retributive justice of heaven, he was struck dumb with terror, and his coward eye quailed before the flashing gaze of Mordaunt.

"I again repeat," said the latter, "that your secret is safe. *You know it is.* You know me to be incapable of a mean revenge. And I will add, that if you

profit by this bitter lesson, if you ever awaken to the beauty of truth and the value of friendship, if you should offer your hand with an honest heart in it, then mine shall close upon it with equal readiness and cordiality."

"You *are* generous," exclaimed Wiley, in a hoarse unnatural voice, "but I cannot talk now. Farewell, Mordaunt. You will never see me again, unless I can accept your offered conditions. I shall leave the city immediately. My character is in your hands. Do what you will with it, I shall never complain."

They parted, and years passed before they met again. When they did meet, Wiley extended his hand, and Mordaunt did not reject it. Magnanimity had triumphed over malice. Wiley never became a warm-hearted or amiable man, for he wanted the genial elements to constitute such a character, but he did endeavour to be a just and honest one, and he had the candour to acknowledge that it was owing to the influence of Mordaunt. He had been a cold skeptic in the belief of the existence of moral excellence; but there was a living reality, a simple majesty and truth in Mordaunt's virtues, to which his spirit bowed in late but sincere acknowledgment.

And once again Mordaunt sat with Constance in the "Fairy's Grotto." The fountain threw up its silvery spray into the moonlight, falling with the same lulling music in the marble reservoir. The beautiful daughter of Danaus still held her empty vase beneath the waters, the lovely Bacchante caught the same resplendent crown upon her leafy brow, and the

graceful Flora twined her fadeless garlands in the shade.

Constance, fair and pure as these marble graces reposing in the moonlight, and ten thousand times as lovely, sat beside her husband, her eyes raised to the night-arch bending radiantly above them.

"Do you see that solitary star?" said Mordaunt, taking her hand in his, and raising it in his toward one whose rays were almost lost in the full glory of the moon. "The first night I ever met you, I fixed my gaze upon that planet, and thoughts, holy and inspiring, rushed into my soul. The dread of poverty, the fear of shame, melted away in its divine effulgence. I saw you in the cottage. From that moment you became the *Evening Star* of my destiny, shining on with steadily increasing brightness unto the perfect day."

## The two Sisters and the two Uncles.

MISS PHILLIS MANNERS was the maiden sister of Mr. Manners, and the female guardian and governess of his two motherless daughters, Lelia and Elmira. One evening, Miss Manners entered the apartment of her neices, with a decided air of vexation, and even anger.

"How provoking!" she exclaimed; "how unfortunate! The most mortifying circumstance in the world!"

"What is it, Aunt Phillis?" asked Lelia, sympathizingly.

"Aunt Phillis again!" repeated the lady. "Will you never learn to call me Cousin Phillis? I have told you a hundred times I disliked that formal, old-fashioned title."

"Forgive me, dear aunt. Well, I cannot help addressing you so—I have always called things by their right names, and as you are my aunt, and not my cousin, I can't see the sin of giving you the title nature designates. You know I haven't been with you long—I shall become accustomed by-and-by to your peculiarities, and endeavour to conform to them. Pray, tell us what is so provoking?"

"Your father has just received a letter from your Uncle Clements. He is coming here to-morrow, the very day I expect your Uncle Banks. Was ever any thing so provoking?"

"Provoking, indeed!" cried Elmira, reflecting, as in a mirror, the mortified expression of her aunt's face.

"Dear Uncle Clements!" exclaimed Lelia, clasping her hands joyfully together. "I am so glad he is coming—Aunt Lydia told me so much of his goodness, piety, and talents, my heart yearns towards him. Our mother, too, loved him very dearly."

Miss Manners cast a withering look on the glowing countenance of Lelia.

"You forget his poverty and the low society he must keep, in comparison with his brother. Mr. Banks is come into possession of a splendid fortune, and will visit us in a style suited to his rank. There will be a succession of parties and entertainments while he is here. We shall all derive great consequence from his wealth—but the poverty of your Uncle Clements will weigh as much against us in the opposite scale. I never was so vexed in my life."

"I did not know that poverty, produced by misfortune, was a crime and a degradation, before," said Lelia, warmly. "For my part, I feel inclined to pay him a thousand times more respect, in his present reduced circumstances, than if he were rolling in affluence."

"Whatever your inclinations may be," said Miss Manners, with dignity, "you will be careful not to offend your Uncle Banks, by showing a preference to Mr. Clements. He is only half brother to your

mother, and I don't see the necessity of calling him uncle at all."

"Must we call him cousin, too?" asked Lelia, laughing.

"I suppose you will honour his precious son Charles, who is to accompany him, with that title," replied her aunt. "But I warn you against familiarity with him. Your Uncle Banks has a son, with whom you may be proud to claim kindred, and though he is your cousin, it does not prevent the possibility of a nearer connection. It would be well to have the property kept in the family. Young ladies, a great deal may depend upon this visit of your uncle's. The stay of the last shall be very short, if it depends on *my* influence."

"Surely, aunt—cousin—you will not treat him with incivility?" said Lelia—looking reproachfully at her silent sister.

"I shall not be dictated to in my course of conduct, Miss Lelia: but whatever it is, I shall expect you will imitate it. Your sister, I am confident, will do so, without any exercise of authority on my part. Your father leaves all household regulations to me, and I shall allow no interference in my arrangements."

She left the room, as she spoke, with a raised head, or rather a raised turban, for her head, unusually small, was enveloped in such voluminous folds of muslin and lace, it required some discrimination to notice the face, surmounted by such a tremendous turret. The sisters were left alone, and looked into each other's faces for a moment, without speaking—

Lelia's cheeks burned with an unusual colour, and her eyes sparkled with excitement.

"Thank Heaven!" cried she, "that I said nothing really disrespectful to Aunt Phillis—but from you, Elmira, I cannot withhold the expression of indignant feeling. Speak to me, sister, and say you scorn such sordid views, and know how to appreciate virtue itself. Say that you will unite with me in paying both our uncles the respect and affection that is due to them—that you will make no distinction in favour of wealth or circumstances. Think if our dear mother were alive, what she would wish us to do, and you will never wound the feelings of one who was so dear to her."

"You are the strangest girl I ever saw in my life, Lelia," said Elmira, coldly; "you make as much fuss about this old uncle as if he were made of gold; I don't know what we shall do with him—for Uncle Banks must have the handsomest chamber, and we must keep the next handsomest for company. Then there is Cousin Phillis' room and ours. The other chambers are very decent, but they have no fire-places. He will be obliged to be satisfied with one of them. Cousin Phillis never will allow a bed to be put in one of the lower apartments."

"Has our father no authority in his own household, that every thing must be referred to *Cousin* Phillis, as you are pleased to call her?" asked Lelia, trying to speak calmly. "If I find Uncle Clements' comfort so entirely disregarded, I shall speak to *him*, and see that he is properly attended to."

"Father would as soon cut off his right hand, as contradict any of Cousin Phillis' orders, I assure you," answered Elmira. "You are the only person who ever dared to do it yet, and you will be very sorry for it. She said before you came home, she knew Aunt Lydia had spoiled you, and it is true enough. You are exactly like her, in thought, word, and action."

"Oh! that I were indeed like her," exclaimed Lelia, "for a gentler purer, holier being, never lived. All my virtues are hers, all my faults my own. Let me never hear *her* reproached for follies or sins which are the legitimate offspring of my own heart."

Unable to repress the tears which this unkind allusion to a relative so tenderly beloved, and so recently lost, excited, Lelia left the room, feeling more keenly than she had ever done before, that between her sister and herself there was not one feeling or principle in common. All that is necessary to state of the previous history of these two young sisters, may be explained in a few words. Deprived in childhood of their mother, they were separated immediately after her death, and placed under influences as opposite as pole to pole. Aunt Lydia, a maiden sister of Mrs. Manners, received the orphan Lelia from her dying mother, as her own, and as such she educated and cherished her, till, her death making her a second time an orphan, she returned to her father's house. Elmira remained at home, under the care of Miss Phillis Manners, who assumed the charge of her brother's house-

hold, with an authority as absolute and undisputed as the laws of the Medes and Persians.

Mr. Manners was one of those good-natured men, who always avoid trouble and contention, and who have not moral courage enough to follow up the principles they profess to admire. He believed his sister one of the best managers in the world, probably from the bustle attending all her movements, and thought himself very fortunate in having so careful and discreet a guardian for his daughter. He regretted that Lelia did not enjoy equal advantages, for Aunt Lydia was so quiet and unassuming, and made so little parade of her own good deeds, and he was so accustomed to the egotism and display of his sister, he imagined that Aunt Lydia was one of those passive characters who exercised but little influence in her own household. Had he reflected a little on the great laws of nature, he would have remembered that the most powerful influences are silent and often unseen. The rays that illumine the immensity of the universe, as silently as brightly execute their glorious mission. The dews that refresh the sultriness of nature, steal silent and unseen from their secret dwelling-place, and "teach mankind unostentatious charity." But Mr. Manners never reasoned from analogy, indeed, he seldom reasoned at all, and it is not strange that the unobtrusive virtues of Aunt Lydia escaped his worldly observation. True, when Lelia returned, he would have thought her very graceful, lovely, and amiable, had not his acute-minded sister discovered so many blemishes in her,

and such superior excellences in Elmira. , He concluded, as usual, that she was a better judge than himself, and her opinion was considered infallible.

Miss Phillis Manners, alias Aunt Phillis, alias Cousin Phillis, would have been in the full sweep of her glory, on the day of Mr. Banks' arrival, had not the expectation of Mr. Clements' visit cast its dark shadow before. It is not to be supposed, that all her anxiety was disinterested, or that it was for the aggrandizement of her nieces alone, she was hoping, and toiling, and planning.

Mr. Banks was a widower, and as she had passed her vernal morn and summer noon in maiden singleness of heart, she was resolved that the quietude of her autumnal eve should be spent in the shadow of the myrtle bower. Notwithstanding her sincerity to her brother, and the truths her oft-consulted mirror breathed of her withering beauty, she fancied every one else must be labouring under an optical illusion, and imagined herself still in the spring-time of youth. It was a great source of vexation that she was compelled to own her once dark, but now bleaching locks, thus detracting from the juvenility of her appearance, but she consoled herself with the idea that a turban was a most becoming and oriental style of head-dress, admirably in keeping with the erectness and dignity of her figure. This day she appeared dressed with elaborate elegance—on her white turban she wore a single artificial white rose, placed over her left ear, partly twisted in her long, flowing curls; pearl ornaments on her neck, and a robe of delicate,

lilac-coloured silk, fitted closely to her really fine form. No wrinkle was ever allowed to mar the outline of her dress, and could she have exercised as arbitrary a dominion over her face, it would have been as smooth as Parian marble. She had been practising a kind of eager smile, with which to welcome the East India nabob, as she had great faith in first impressions. Elmira, who implicitly followed her aunt's directions, was also much adorned, but Lelia made no alteration in the mourning garb she wore in memory of Aunt Lydia. Miss Phillis told her that she had never looked so shocking in her life, that her eyes were as heavy as lead, and her complexion as pale as ashes. She did, indeed, look pale, for she was agitated in the prospect of meeting so many kindred she had never seen, and in the dread that their visit would be a source of domestic trial to her, determined as she was not to yield her principles of right to the tyranny of her aunt, or the ridicule of her sister.

"He's come—Uncle Banks is come!" exclaimed Elmira, who had been watching at the window, alternately with her aunt, at least two hours. In a moment the whole household was in a bustle—a splendid carriage stopped at the door—a footman let down the steps, with as much ceremony as if a king were about to descend. Aunt Phillis stood on the threshold, smiling, and courtseying, and trying to blush, as a large, red-faced gentleman, wrapped in a blue cloak, slowly alighted, and walked up the flag-stones, breathing audibly at every step. A tall, straight, sandy-



haired young man followed him, in whom Elmira immediately discovered a striking resemblance to the picture of Prince Albert, and who was dressed in as princely a style as our republican costume will allow.

"Welcome, a thousand times welcome," exclaimed Aunt Phillis, sinking lower and lower, while she extended both her hands to the short-breathed gentleman, who came panting towards her.

"Thank you—how d'ye do? Hope to see you very well, ma'am," said Mr. Banks, as soon as he recovered his breath sufficiently, shaking her hand up and down, something in the style of a pump-handle. "Ha—this is my niece, is it? Blooming as a peach, glad to see your uncle, hey?" catching Elmira under the chin, and giving her a salute that echoed to the farthest corner of the ante-room. "This is my son Joe—quite a man grown—just like his father—chip of the old block—ha!"

Lelia, who had shrunk back in the first rush of welcome, now tremblingly approached her uncle. He was the first of her mother's relatives she had ever seen, except Aunt Lydia, and her heart throbbed with undefinable emotion.

"What little baggage is this?" cried Mr. Banks, giving her at the same time a smothering embrace. "Just like her mother. This must be Liddy's child.

Lelia saw a tear trembling in the corner of his clear, gray eye, and she forgot for a moment the roughness of his manners, and the singularity of his dialect.

As soon as they entered the sitting-room, Mr. Banks sank down into a chair, as if quite exhausted, calling for a cushion for his feet in no very gentle tone. Miss Phillis sprang to the sofa, and catching up the cushions, placed them under his feet like a lapwing.

"Thank you, ma'am. Excuse me—troubled with the gout—dreadful twinges—great invalid—poor appetite—be better by-and-by."

Lelia thought it strange to hear a man, with such round, ruddy cheeks and robust frame, complaining of ill-health, and she could not help smiling to hear her aunt declaring that he did indeed look like an invalid, and she feared the journey had been too much for him.

Cousin Joe seemed as bashful and reserved as his father was free and easy, and seating himself at a respectful distance, communed with his own thoughts. Placed in such a luxurious attitude, Mr. Banks gradually recovered the composure of his muscles, which had been dreadfully distorted, nodded and smiled at his nieces, and calling Lelia to him, made her sit down on his knee, and patted her on the head like a little child.

"Good girl," said he; "Liddy told me all about you. Don't be afraid of your uncle. Rough outside—nothing but the bark—smooth kernel inside."

Lelia smiled, and began to think she should like her uncle, in spite of his rough outside, but Aunt Phillis was not at all pleased that Lelia should be placed in the foreground of the picture, and drawing Elmira towards him, she said, in a playful tone, "you

must not slight *my* pet—you don't know how anxiously she has watched your coming. She has been almost crazy to see you."

"Fine girl, too, cried Mr. Banks, pinching her cheeks; "good healthy colour. Got any sweethearts, hey? Must look sharp—see if they've got the chink. Can't live without it—oils the springs—keeps them agoing—hey?"

Here he put both hands in his pockets, and shook with inward laughter for several moments; then opening his mouth, the sound began to roll out in echoing peals, which Aunt Phillis thought proper to echo again, more faintly, and Elmira fainter still. Lelia alone looked grave, and her gravity seemed to increase Mr. Banks' mirth, who continued to laugh till he was obliged to hold his own sides.

"Can't help it," said he; "never could stop—does one good—helps digestion—troubled with the dyspepsia—obliged to diet."

Lelia thought when she saw her uncle at the supper-table, complaining of the poorness of his appetite, yet eating heartily all the time, requiring a dozen things which were not on the table; keeping the servants running in every direction, and Aunt Phillis' eyes flying from dish to dish in ludicrous perplexity, trying to anticipate his wishes, that he was the strangest invalid she ever saw. He was very particular about eggs, an indispensable ingredient of all his meals. At first they were too hard, then too soft—again, there was a crack in the shell, through which some drops of water had penetrated. At length he had the boil-

ing water brought to the table, and taking out his watch, cooked them to his apparent satisfaction. Poor Aunt Phillis sat, without eating a mouthful, endeavouring to look pleased, though ready to burst with vexation, for she prided herself upon the superiority of her cookery, and on this occasion no luxury had been spared, which could tempt the most fastidious taste. She had, however, one source of consolation. The evening was already advanced, and Mr. Clements had not yet made his appearance. She could not help hoping some fortunate accident had detained him, and that he would not be present to obstruct the incense she was preparing for the golden calf she had set up as her idol. Night came on, and Mr. Banks, pleading excessive fatigue and gouty pains, was ushered up stairs into the most sumptuous apartment the house afforded, and Aunt Phillis drew a deep inspiration, as if relieved from the visitation of a nightmare.

"Very pleasant gentleman your uncle is," said she, looking at Elmira. "Rather particular in his ways—but that is owing to his ill-health. So perfectly original. How do you like your Cousin Joseph? I think him one of the most perfect gentlemen I have ever seen."

"I have no doubt we shall find him very interesting," replied Elmira; "but he does not seem inclined to talk much. He seems very distant, for a cousin."

"You cannot expect so much familiarity from one of his great expectations, as from an inferior person," said Aunt Phillis. "He cannot but feel his own consequence."

Lelia smiled, and was about to speak, when Aunt Phillis interrupted her.

"I wish you would break yourself of that saucy habit of smiling at my remarks, Miss Lelia; I assure you, I think it very impertinent."

"Dear aunt——"

"Dear aunt again—you called me dear aunt at the supper-table three times, as if in defiance of my prohibition, and on purpose to draw the attention of Mr. Banks."

The lumbering sound of wheels approaching the door, arrested the attention of all, and the clinking sound of the falling steps, convinced them that some one was descending.

"It must be Uncle Clements," exclaimed Lelia, eagerly opening the door, while Aunt Phillis and Elmira exchanged glances of undisguised chagrin.

"You need not ring the bell," said Aunt Phillis, seeing the motion of Lelia's hand; "the stage-driver will attend to him."

But the mandate came too late, for a merry peal rang through the hall, as Mr. Clements and his son entered the house. The lamps that lighted the passage most brilliantly in honour of Mr. Banks, threw their full blaze on their advancing figures, and Lelia, on whom the whole burden of welcome seemed to rest, felt a glow of delight diffused over her whole heart, in tracing, even then, in the mild lineaments of her uncle's face, a resemblance to her beloved Aunt Lydia.

"Oh, what a contrast!" thought she, as she looked

at her Cousin Charles. The next moment she was in her uncle's affectionate embrace—as affectionate, but far less energetic, than Mr. Banks' *high-pressure* greeting. Miss Phillis Manners received them with stately civility, which Elmira tried to imitate, though she could not help thinking that if her Cousin Joe did resemble Prince Albert, her Cousin Charles was vastly handsomer, and more engaging in his appearance. He was dressed in a complete suit of black, which corresponded well with his dark hair and eyes, and so was the father, but the coat of the latter was rusty and threadbare, and his whole apparel that of a decayed gentleman.

"And these are my two nieces," said Mr. Clements, looking from one to the other, with moistened eyes, "my sister's children! Is it possible? How difficult it is to realize your blooming womanhood! Charles, you have often heard me speak of their mother; here," turning to Lelia, "is her living picture."

A violent ringing of the bell produced a sudden silence. Miss Phillis started up in alarm, when Mr. Banks' footman opened the door, with a half comic, half tragic countenance.

"What is the matter?" cried Miss Phillis. "Is Mr. Banks ill? Has any thing happened?"

"No, ma'am!" he replied; "but he says the sheets are damp, and will give him the rheumatiz. He wants them changed, if you please, directly. He's walking about as fast as he can for exercise, till it's done, to keep from catching cold."

"Tell him the sheets have been doubly and trebly

aired," answered she, in a raised tone. "I am remarkably careful about such things. There is no possible danger of taking cold."

"It won't do any good to tell him so, ma'am," said the man, grinning. "When he once gets a notion into his head, you might as well try to move the globe as to get it out of him. He won't sleep to-night, unless you humour him about the sheets."

Miss Phillis left the room with great alacrity; but the manner in which she closed the doors, showed she was not altogether pleased with Mr. Banks' original ways.

Lelia began to feel very uneasy about her uncle's accommodations for the night. She saw he looked pale and fatigued, and seemed oppressed with a dry cough. Charles watched his father's countenance with deep anxiety, and asked him if he would not retire, adding, that he was still too much of an invalid not to practice some self-indulgence.

Lelia had not exchanged a word with her aunt upon the subject; she had put off the evil hour as long as possible. It could not be deferred any longer, and hearing her footsteps descending the stairs, she rose with precipitation and left the room, telling her uncle that she would have a room immediately prepared for his reception. She met her aunt on the stairs, whose clouded brow would have terrified her from any purpose, in which her own gratification was concerned.

"Cousin Phillis," said she, trying to propitiate her, by giving her the name she loved, "Uncle Clements

is very much fatigued, and wishes to retire. I suppose he will occupy the blue chamber."

"The blue chamber!" repeated Aunt Phillis. "And what right have you to think that *he* will occupy the blue chamber? The very best chamber in the house."

"Because," said Lelia, gathering courage as she proceeded, "because there is no other unoccupied sleeping-room, sufficiently comfortable at this season of the year. There is the one which has been appropriated to Uncle Banks, certainly as handsome as the blue chamber. Then there is father's, and yours, and sister's, and my own—all warm and pleasant. The others have no fire-places, and you would not surely assign them to an invalid, such cold nights as these."

Aunt Phillis gave Lelia a look which had often made others quail, but she returned it with an undaunted glance.

"Silence is assent," cried she, springing down the steps. "I'll tell Peggy to kindle a fire in the blue chamber."

"If you do," said Aunt Phillis, shaking her forefinger at her from the platform on which she stood, with the gesture of a Pythoness; "if you do, you'll repent it in dust and ashes."

Lelia paused. Her spirit was roused. She felt that she was the eldest daughter of her father's house, and had a right to command, when her father's reputation for justice and hospitality was thus endangered. She feared, however, a scene of disgraceful violence, which might reach her uncle's ears, and though almost despising herself for the act, she

condescended to plead and reason. She went back to where her aunt stood.

"You do not reflect, aunt, what a strange appearance it will have—such a marked distinction between two brothers. The very servants will talk of it, and report it to our neighbours. We shall be condemned by all as mercenary and unkind."

"I don't care if we are, miss," retorted she, "it's none of their business, nor yours either. As to the chamber I've allotted to him, I've no doubt it's a palace to what he ever slept in before. What's he, I should like to know—a poor, penny-stripped fellow, a hanger-on of rich relations, a codger worth nothing but the coat on his back, and that almost out at the elbows, that he should be served so daintily? He had no business to stick his nose where he's not wanted. If he don't like his accommodations, he may go away, and the sooner the better."

Aunt Phillis paused to take breath, as a person drinking a glass of soda sometimes stops from the rapidity of the effervescence—but the angry fluid continued to flow from her eyes.

"I will appeal to my father," said Lelia, "and, thank heaven! here he comes."

Mr. Manners at this moment opened the street door, and looked, with a little trepidation, on the theatrical figure of his sister, standing erect upon the stairs, the rose over her left ear trembling and tossing as if instinct with life, a symptom with which he was very familiar; for, like certain animals, when excited by passion, she had a vibratory motion of the ears.

Lelia ran to her father, and putting her arm in his, drew him towards his sister, in spite of his evident reluctance.

"Dear father," said she, "Aunt Phillis is not willing that Uncle Clements should have a comfortable room to sleep in. Uncle Banks has the green chamber, with a blazing fire, and poor Uncle Clements is to be put in the north-east corner of the house, without a particle of fire, or even curtains to his bed. Is it right, father? is it kind?"

Poor Mr. Manners was so unaccustomed to exercise any decision of his own in household affairs, and feared so much the keen edge of his sister's tongue—he found himself in a most unpleasant dilemma. He hated scenes—he wanted to get along with as little trouble as possible.

"Brother," said Miss Phillis, "we've lived very peaceably, till this girl came back to give me her impertinence from morning till night. I will not bear it—if she's to be mistress, I'll quit the house. I leave you to decide."

She uttered this in a low tone, and a kind of bitter smile, a thousand times more fearful than her frown.

"'Psho! Phillis—don't talk in that way," stammered Mr. Manners, "she don't mean any disrespect to you; there's some misunderstanding, I dare say. Lelia, your aunt will see that every thing is right; I always leave such matters to her, and it is proper that you should do so—there's a plenty of room in the house—no difficulty——"

Ashamed of his want of moral resolution, he hastened into the parlour, whither his sister followed him, with a majestical step, leaving Lelia alone on the stairs. So completely overwhelmed was she with disappointment, shame, and, it must be confessed, with indignation too, that she sat down, and leaning against the banister, covered her face and wept like a child.

"What will they think of us?" said she to herself, "what will they think of me? It was I who told them I would order a room to be prepared. They will think it is my selection, and despise me in their hearts—and there is Uncle Banks, with his great ruddy face and vigorous frame, in his sumptuous apartment, issuing his orders with the authority of the Grand Lama. Oh! the omnipotence of gold!"

Absorbed in these bitter reflections, and hearing only the sound of her own stifled sobs, she was not aware of approaching footsteps till they were close beside her, when, looking up, she beheld her uncle ascending the stairs, leaning on the arm of his son, and preceded by Peggy, the chambermaid, who looked ashamed of the office she was performing. Her uncle paused as he passed, and laying his hand tenderly on her head, exclaimed, "God bless thee, my child."

Her Cousin Charles, too, caught her hand, and pressing it warmly, said, "Good night, my dear cousin."

The words were nothing in themselves, but there was something in the tone of his voice, and in the

glance of his dark, penetrating eye, that seemed to say, "Thou hast no part or lot in this matter."

Could they have overheard the conversation respecting them? It was possible that the door might have been left ajar, and Aunt Phillis' voice was shrill in her anger. She knew not that she ought to derive comfort from this supposition, since it exposed her aunt and her father to such opprobrium, but she could not help encouraging the idea, and retired to her chamber, soothed by the remembrance of her uncle's blessing, and her cousin's affectionate "good night."

She was permitted to remain alone some time, for Elmira was closeted with her aunt, probably listening to her wrathful account of the events of the evening. Lelia rejoiced at this circumstance, as she could in stillness and solitude commune with her own excited spirit. Upon reflection, she was not pleased with her own conduct. Principle had guided her actions, but passion had mingled its base alloy with the pure gold of her upright intentions. She trembled to think of the unchristian feelings in which she had indulged.

"God forgive me!" cried she, clasping her hands over the Bible, which she had opened and commenced to read, preparatory to her nightly rest, "for the evil thoughts of this night. I have hated my aunt, despised my father and sister, and triumphed in my own conscious superiority. Perhaps if I had displayed more meekness, her stubborn will might have yielded. Uncle Clements looks like a Christian. He has the evangelical countenance of Aunt Lydia, her mild

benignant smile. No bitterness dwells in his heart. I will try to banish it from mine."

When Elmira entered the apartment, accompanied by her aunt, who always remained a while in her nieces' room, before retiring to her own, Lelia's head rested placidly on the pillow, and her eyelids were gently closed. Aunt Phillis held the candle over her to see if she were really asleep. Her cheeks were flushed, and the moisture yet glittered on her eyelids; but her soft, regular breathing, indicated the peacefulness and depth of her slumbers. Young eyelids, steeped in tears, close heavily in sleep, and Lelia's self-communion and self-humiliation had diffused a quietude over her troubled soul, and hushed her passions into rest. It would seem impossible for any one to look upon her, in her innocence and purity, and cherish vindictive feelings towards her; but the very contemplation of this innocence and sweetness only added fuel to Aunt Phillis' ire.

"Impudent little minx," muttered she, "I wonder how she dares to sleep!"

It is hardly uncharitable to suppose that she would not have been sorry if a stray spark had fallen on her muslin night-cap, and scorched the bright locks that wandered over her brow. Aunt Phillis sat down the candle, seated herself in front of the fire, and placing her feet on the fender, fell into a reverie.

"It is very cold," said she, at length, drawing a large shawl over her shoulders. "I am glad I told them to keep up a fire in Mr. Banks' room to-night. If he should get the gout in his stomach, he might

die, and I wouldn't have him die for a thousand dollars, before——"

She stopped, for she found she was thinking aloud, and became conscious Elmira was listening, for she laughed aloud.

"I'm sure there does not seem much danger of his dying, with his red face and stout body," said she. "Uncle Clements looks like a shadow to him. But really, Cousin Charles is very handsome, and seems very much like a gentleman, too. He is not dressed meanly, either—and looks proud enough, though he is so poor. Don't you think he is handsome, aunt?"

"I don't think any thing about him," replied she sharply; "I don't want to hear his name, or his father's either. I wish they were both in Nova Zembla."

"They might as well be in Nova Zembla, as the place they are in now," thought Elmira, "for all the comfort they get in it."

But she was prudent enough not to express this idea. She began to take off the ornaments from her hair, and while engaged in this operation before the mirror, a sudden thought seemed to strike her.

"Was mother very handsome, Cousin Phillis?" asked she, twisting a string of pearls round her fingers, again and again.

"What a question!" repeated Aunt Phillis. "She looked well enough, I believe—nothing extraordinary. Why?"

"Because every one says Lelia is the image of her, as if it were the greatest compliment in the world. I



wonder who *I* am like—for I am not in the least like Lelia.”

“You are said to resemble *me*,” said Aunt Phillis, drawing up her neck with a self-complacent air; “I heard Mr. Banks say there was a striking resemblance.”

“Now, aunt, you know he never said any such a thing,” replied Elmira, deeply mortified; “he said there was a family resemblance, and that was all. How can you say, aunt, I look like you? There isn’t a feature in our faces alike—and then you look so much *older*!”

Elmira forgot her fear of her aunt, in her wounded vanity, or she would never have dared to breathe the hint that she thought her older than herself, or less handsome.

“Really, Miss,” cried Aunt Phillis, giving the fender a push against the fire-place as she spoke; it’s a great insult to be said to resemble *me*, is it? I am not so old or so ugly, as to be ashamed to look in the glass with any one. Really, these bread and butter Misses think any body, who has arrived at years of discretion, is as old as Methuselah, and ugly too, forsooth. Well, the world has got to a strange pass, when little girls not only think themselves wiser and better, but younger and handsomer than any body else.”

She took up the candle with a jerk, gave the fender another push, and walked out of the apartment in a highly *acidified* state of feeling.

“Look like her, indeed!” said Elmira, examining herself critically in the looking-glass; “the old fright!

She might have been dug out of the ruins of Herculaneum, for all the youth and beauty she possesses. Who ever heard of such ridiculous vanity?”

Elmira was not conscious that it was vanity equally ridiculous, which reigned in her own breast, and caused a dislike to her aunt, for the resemblance which she had pointed out, which all her injustice to Lelia, and coldness and incivility to her uncle, had failed to inspire. Alas! for poor human nature.

The next morning, Mr. Banks and his son breakfasted in their own apartment, and almost all the servants in the household were put in requisition, to satisfy his capricious desires.

Mr. Clements and Charles took their seats at the breakfast-table, but the pallid complexion of the former indicated that no refreshing slumbers had repaired his enfeebled frame. As Mr. Manners observed the delicacy of his appearance, his slight appetite, and that he was repeatedly obliged to put down his coffee, to suppress a rising cough, his conscience upbraided him for his pusillanimous conduct, and the image of his wife, once tenderly loved, seemed to rise before him, in the person of her neglected brother. There was a gravity, too, on the fine brow of his nephew, Charles, which he construed into a silent rebuke. Then Lelia looked sad, and he was ashamed to meet her usually loving glance. His sister appeared in one of her sour moods, and Elmira somewhat sullen. Altogether he had a very uncomfortable breakfast, and though he was glad when it was over, he did not feel better satisfied with himself



when seated with the same group around the fire-side.

The entrance of Mr. Banks and his tall son created a great sensation. Aunt Phillis sprang to arrange his cushions, and made every one move from their places to give him the best seat by the fire, and the most luxurious chair. He presented a most imposing spectacle in his morning costume, wrapped in a wadded robe de chambre of silver gray, lined with scarlet, a turban of yellow silk, white fur moccasins, and gloves of similar materials. He nodded familiarly to all, as he sank down into his cushions in a true oriental style, winked at Miss Phillis, chuckled Lelia under the chin, and slapped Charles on the shoulder, whose gravity gave place to ill-suppressed mirth at his uncle's extraordinary figure.

"I hope you rested well last night," said Miss Phillis; "that you found your room comfortable."

"Rested like a king," replied he; "warm as toast; chilled at first by damp sheets; soon got over it; all right at last. How are you, brother?—look rather pale. Sleep well, hey?"

"I did not rest well," answered Mr. Clements; "I have a difficulty of breathing, which often compels me to walk during the night. I feared I should disturb the household by so doing."

"Oh, uncle!" exclaimed Lelia—"and were you obliged to do so last night?"

"I did not mean to distress you, my child," said he, taking her hand in his; "but I walked my room the greater part of the night, and as I know it must

be unpleasant to those who may be contiguous to me; and as I perceive it is not convenient to remain longer, I am sorry to say I must leave you this evening."

"Oh, uncle!" again ejaculated Lelia, giving her father a look that spoke volumes.

"Must not think of such a thing," stammered Mr. Manners; "perfectly convenient—very happy to see you—fear you haven't been as comfortable as you should."

"What's that you are talking of—going away?" interrupted Mr. Banks. "Sha'n't do any such thing. Not convenient! Saw a room fit for a prince close to mine; not a soul in it. Sleep there to-night. Walk till morning—won't wake one. Go away!—nothing but pride. Hate to be outshone, hey? Empty pockets ache near full ones."

Here he put his hands in his pockets, and jingling some gold and silver, began one of his interminable laughs.

Miss Phillis saw that it was necessary, to redeem her reputation in the eyes of Mr. Banks, to treat his brother with more civility. She condescended to make some apology for the *mistake* of the preceding night, and promised to prepare the apartment which Mr. Banks desired for him, if he would remain.

Thus authorized, Mr. Manners became quite eloquent, and Lelia's eyes pleaded more eloquently than all their words. Mr. Clements could not resist

their mute appeal, and declared his willingness to remain.

Cheerfulness was restored, and even Miss Phillis appeared amiable; for the conviction that she had acted right, though forced into the path of duty, gave a sweetened expression to her face, which elicited the evident admiration of Mr. Banks, and added, in consequence, to her own self-elation.

A week passed away, during which time the two uncles and their sons became completely domesticated in the family of Mr. Manners. Mr. Banks continued to assume the most amusing airs of superior grandeur, sported a most magnificent wardrobe, flirted with Aunt Phillis, and pinched and kissed her nieces—while Mr. Clements, mild, dignified and intellectual, wore the same thread-bare coat, and the same nap-worn hat. Aunt Phillis, before whose eyes visions of wedded pomp and splendour, bright as if called up by the wand of the genii, were constantly floating, scarcely noticed his presence, as, according to her interpretation, he seemed too conscious of his own insignificance to force himself upon the observation of any one. Cousin Joe was still reserved, but as Elmira, according to her aunt's instructions, paid him the most marked attention, he attached himself more and more to her society, and it seemed more than probable that a double wedding might take place. Lelia, who, in her pure singleness of heart, thought not of conquests or weddings, felt a delight in the companionship of her Cousin Charles, that, succeeding the dearth of

all congenial feelings, had the power of enchantment. The books which she had read alone, and which had enthralled her with the master-spell of genius, acquired a double fascination, since they had discoursed of their excellencies. He had a finely modulated voice, and when he read aloud, she discovered that the dullest author had charms unknown before. Lelia was very fond of drawing, and she now took unwonted pleasure in the exercise of this accomplishment, for Charles had the painter's eye, as well as the poet's tongue. And, in their hours of closer intimacy, when withdrawn from the bustling circle too much occupied with their own interests to interfere with them, they sat near Mr. Clements' side, who led them on to themes of high and holy import, and thought and feeling came up from the innermost depths of the soul, and brightened or darkened in the speaking eye—it was then that Lelia learned, that, while music, painting, and poetry gave grace and beauty to his mind, a rich vein of philosophy, and a still richer vein of religion, ran like golden ore through the whole texture of her cousin's character. She had never been so happy in her life. Though it was winter, and the trees were leafless, and the ground bleak and bare, she seemed surrounded with the verdure of the aroma of perpetual summer. All above her was sunshine, all beneath was flowers—for the affections of her ardent heart, which, since her Aunt Lydia's death, had been yearning for some legitimate object, on which to exercise their tenderness, had found one worthy of all their

strength and fervour, and on which they expanded with unconscious warmth. But this is a working-day world, and life has *realities* which often force us from the lovely *idealities*, which hang their beautiful drapery over the machinery of our existence. Lelia had one serious source of anxiety in the midst of her new felicity—her uncle's coat; she could not bear to see his dignified figure clouded by such a rusty garment. She was at first troubled that Charles should be so much better dressed than his father, fearing that a tinge of selfishness tarnished the lustre of his virtues; but her uncle had removed this fear, by accidentally mentioning that the wardrobe of Charles was replenished by a friend, to whom he was willing to be under obligations, trusting that he would be able to repay them, by the exercise of his own talents, when he was once established in the world. Her Aunt Phillis was in a high state of preparation for a large entertainment in honour of Mr. Banks and his son. Lelia was distressed at the thought of her Uncle Clements appearing at it in his shabby suit. She would have begged her father to present him a new one, but remembering the scene about the bed-chamber, she dreaded a similar refusal.

"What a shame!" thought she, "that Uncle Banks should be revelling in affluence, and suffer his brother to wear such poor apparel!" I should think pride, if no better feeling, would incite him to a more just and generous conduct."

An unexpected circumstance favoured her secret

wishes. Her father had promised Elmira and herself a set of jewels, when they first appeared in the raiments of womanhood. The fulfilment of this promise had been deferred from time to time, though Elmira often reminded him of it. Lelia, in the comparative seclusion of her life, sighed for no such decorations, and now her mourning dress precluded them. Mr. Manners, finding himself in a munificent vein, in consequence of the brilliant prospects opening through his rich brother-in-law, gave them each the money requisite for the purchase, and telling them to make their own selection, left them, that they might consult their aunt upon the occasion.

Lelia followed him with blushing earnestness. "Dear father," said she, "I thank you more than I can express for your kindness. Yet I dare to ask for an additional proof of your goodness. Would you be displeased if I appropriated this money to another purpose than the jewels. I am in mourning now, and would rather not wear them. Yet, if this is a gift to me, and I am permitted to use it as I would wish, you will make me very happy."

"Who ever heard of a young girl that did not want jewels before?" exclaimed Mr. Manners, half incredulous of the correctness of his hearing.

"What other purchase do you wish to make? I thought your wardrobe was well supplied."

"And so it is," replied Lelia, twisting her father's guard-chain round her trembling fingers, for she feared he would question her too closely—"but—if you will allow me to employ the money in the way I like best,

I will make no unworthy use of it. I will do nothing which your own heart will not approve. Say yes, dear father, and do not ask me to tell you any thing more."

Lelia had such a beseeching way with her, it was impossible for any one but Aunt Phillis to resist her. Mr. Manners was touched by her disinterestedness. Perhaps his mind caught a glimpse of her purpose, and being ashamed that he had not anticipated her, he forbore to ask her further questions.

"You are a strange child," said he, smiling, "but I believe I must trust you this time. Do what you like with it. It is your own."

Lelia threw her arms around his neck, and gave him at least half a dozen kisses; then running to her uncle's room, where he usually sat reading at this hour, she knocked for admittance. She did not realize the delicacy of her office till she stood before him, with a hue, deep as that of convicted guilt, dyeing her cheeks.

"What petition, or confession, do those blushes herald?" said he, laying down his book, as she entered.

"It is, indeed, a petition, uncle, but I know not how to word it; I fear you will be offended, and I could not brook your displeasure."

"I do not think it possible for you to do any thing to offend me," answered he, taking her hand in both his—"nor do I think I could refuse any petition you might offer, 'even were it half of my kingdom.'"

"Then take this trifle," said she, putting the paper

which contained the money in his hand, and clasping his fingers tightly around it, "and let me see my dear uncle at Aunt Phillis' grand fete, as she calls it, in a new suit, which he must wear, in honour of his, perhaps, too presumptuous niece."

She dared not look in his face, and as he did not speak immediately, she feared he was offended, and that the pride of poverty rebelled against the offering, but a tear, which fell upon the hand which clasped his, convinced her that his silence was not that of haughtiness or resentment.

"I can say, with your favourite Miranda, that 'I'm a fool to weep at what I'm glad of,'" cried he at length, "for I do prize your gift, my Lelia, beyond all words. Not that I attach much value to a new coat after all, but the feelings which prompted the act, sanctify the offering in my eyes. I know you will not love me more than you do in this old suit, which I must wrap up in lavender and sweet-smelling shrubs, as a memento of my visit here—but strangers look at the coat, and not at the man. There are a great many Aunt Phillises in the world, and very few Lelias."

Lelia felt so happy at the successful accomplishment of her wishes, that she went warbling down stairs like a bird, and actually danced into the drawing-room, to the horror of Aunt Phillis, who thought it an unpardonable sin for any one to deviate from the straight forward and perpendicular lines of utility and decorum.

In the course of the evening, Elmira asked her sister

if she did not intend to go with her, in the morning, to purchase the jewels.

"Lelia don't care about jewels," said Mr. Manners, significantly, "she is a girl in ten thousand."

Lelia began to examine her work-box very industriously, and pretended not to hear what they were saying.

"I should not be surprised," said Elmira, laughingly, "if she put her money out at interest, or in the saving banks, she's such a utilitarian."

"Perhaps she is going to establish a charity school," cried Aunt Phillis, with a sneer. Mr. Banks not happening to be present, she thought she might relax a little from her amiability.

"To whatever use she has appropriated it," said Mr. Clements, "she will receive, not only thirty, but sixty, nay an hundred fold."

Charles, who sat beside his cousin, took up a spool of thread from her work-box, and appeared to be scrutinizing its quality most earnestly, but he was in reality watching her downcast face, and thinking it was scarcely a merit in Lelia to sacrifice personal ornaments, since she was in herself so lovely and so loveable. He knew the purpose to which she had devoted her father's gift, and he longed to tell her of the gratitude and admiration she had inspired, but he would not wound her modesty by confessing a knowledge of her disinterested goodness.

"Are you going to take lessons in sewing, Charles?" asked Cousin Joe, unexpectedly breaking silence. "I should judge so, by the interest you manifest for that

work-box." It was the first witticism Cousin Joe had attempted to make, and every one laughed—Aunt Phillis seemed ready to fall into convulsions, for Joe was an object of her homage, inferior only to his father.

It is not our intention to give a minute description of Aunt Phillis' splendid fete. It had the elaborate display and ceremony usual on such occasions, but seldom is a fashionable party graced by such figures as Mr. Banks and Aunt Phillis presented to the admiring eye. He wore a coat and small clothes of superb black velvet, relieved by a vest of the deepest crimson, composed of the same rich materials. White silk stockings, and golden knee-buckles; voluminous shirt-ruffles, and multitudinous rings, distinguished the man of wealth from the inferior throng. As Aunt Phillis promenaded up and down the saloon, leaning on his arm, she believed herself the envy of every female heart, as well as the admiration of every manly eye. She wore on this occasion, which she thought but the prelude of a nuptial festival, a dress of white satin, trimmed with blonde, a gossamer turban, profusely trimmed with pearls and flowers, among which the orange blossom bloomed with prophetic sweetness. Lelia could have laughed at her aunt's *vehement* affectation of juvenility, but she remembered that she was a moral and immortal being, and sighed to see her thus twining with roses and gems the sepulchre of youth. She saw her sister's neck and arms glittering with jewels, and she did not repine, for her eye rested on her Uncle Clements, and she would not have ex-

changed her feelings for the diamonds of Golconda. How well he looked in his new suit of deep black! How she admired the soft shadows of silver gray that stole, like a mist, over his jetty hair! How her heart throbbed as she met his affectionate smile, his grateful, approving glance!

Mr. Clements had another silent admirer. It was no other than Mr. Manners. He had been watching his daughter's countenance; and, following the direction of her eyes, he could not help sympathizing with her enthusiastic emotions. The freshness and sensibility of life's earlier days, when her mother hung upon his arm a young and confiding bride, came back upon him. He forgot the hardening lessons the world had taught him, his pusillanimous submission to his sister's arbitrary sway—he was once more a man and a father. Drawing near her, he was about to tell her that he had discovered her secret, and that she need not fear his anger, when he saw Charles anticipate him. The young man bent down and talked to her in a low voice, and she answered him in the same tone. Moreover, there was an expression in the young man's eyes very different from what cousins are wont to wear, and Lelia's colour deepened, and flitted, and resolved at last into that roseate hue, which is said to be emblematic of something more than a cousin's love.

"I must look to this," thought Mr. Manners, "he is a fine young fellow—but he is too poor to think of marrying. I wish he were Mr. Banks' son, for Lelia's sake."

The father was once more merged in the man of the world. Nature yielded to Gold.

Aunt Phillis was too much excited that night to close her eyes in sleep. Mr. Banks had done every thing but make a downright offer of himself. He had invited her and Elmira to accompany them home, telling her that he wanted her to see his house and grounds—to show her in what style he lived. She was to select a building spot for his son, who was to have an establishment equal to Aladdin's palace—and over that establishment, Elmira was destined to preside. The gray, wavering light of dawn, saw Aunt Phillis still absorbed in the contemplation of her future grandeur. She then sank into a kind of extatic doze, in which she beheld Mr. Banks' gold knee-buckles glittering at her feet, where he had prostrated himself, in the act of surrendering to her his heart, his hand, and his fortune.

The time drew near for the departure of the two uncles. Aunt Phillis and Elmira were so much occupied in arranging their apparel for the anticipated visit, they had no leisure to notice the evident dejection of Lelia, or if they had, they would have attributed it to envy at their superior good fortune.

"Sorry for Lelia," said Mr. Banks, patting her on the head. "Good girl—pretty girl—wish I had room in the carriage for you—why not go with Uncle Clements?—Ashamed to ask you? Charles going away. Be so lonely—what say, brother, hey?"

"That my poor home will be transformed into an Eden bower, with such a gentle, ministering spirit

there. But what says my dear niece? Would she consent to such a sacrifice? Charles has received a commission which will take him immediately to a foreign land. I shall be indeed most solitary."

"Oh! willingly, gladly will I accompany you," cried Lelia, "if my father will consent."

That consent was not easily obtained; but when he considered that Charles was to be absent, and the danger he feared would be thus averted, his greatest objection was removed. Another very strong one remained, the want of female companionship. This was obviated by Mr. Clements' description of his housekeeper—a most motherly and estimable woman; and who would prove a sufficient guardian for his young niece.

"There are very few poor men," said Mr. Clements, "in the possession of such a blessing, as this faithful and attached friend. She has remained with me during all my misfortunes, serving me from attachment, that looks for no reward beyond the exercise of its allotted duties."

Mr. Manners at length consented that Lelia should accompany him, upon condition of a speedy return. The departure of the travellers was deferred for some days, in consequence of an unexpected movement on the part of Cousin Joe. He insisted that he could not, and would not start till his union was consummated with Elmira, with whom he seemed every moment more enamoured. Elmira, notwithstanding the chilling influence of Aunt Phillis' worldly maxims and example, had some feelings true to nature lingering

in the depth of her heart. She thought she would not feel so reluctant to this marriage, for reluctant she unaffectedly was, though she had used all the arts of her sex, to allure him,—if Charles were not present. Aunt Phillis thought upon the whole that it would be the height of gentility to have the wedding take place on the morning of their journey, and then, on their return, celebrate the nuptials by a large wedding party. Mr. Manners was well pleased with the match, and as all the higher powers were propitious, Elmira thought it best to smile and be propitious too.

Just before the wedding, Aunt Phillis took Elmira aside, and after a long preamble about the importance of commencing the married life with grace and propriety, said, "Remember, my dear, that there is a great deal in the name you will bear; that is, there is a fashionable and unfashionable style of addressing a married woman. You must not allow any one to call you Mrs. Elmira Banks, or young Mrs. Banks—but Mrs. Joseph Banks. That will be a sufficient distinction. When the senior Mr. Banks—when *I* am married, (there is no use in speaking in inuendoes,) I intend to be called simply Mrs. Banks. Remember, my dear, Mrs. Joseph Banks."

Poor Aunt Phillis, she was already trembling, at the idea of being styled old Mrs. Banks, and seeking to avert the impending calamity. Lelia beheld, with unspeakable agitation, the preparations for her sister's nuptials. She knew she did not love her future bridegroom, and that the gold for which she was about to sacrifice the truthfulness of nature, and the bloom of



youth—would never fill the aching void felt by the craving heart, too late made sensible of its capacities for happiness.

"God has no blessing for such unhallowed vows," said she to herself, as she stood pale and tearful by her sister's side, during the nuptial ceremony. When the benediction was pronounced and the bride ready to receive the congratulations of her friends, Lelia could not speak—she could only lean her head on Elmira's shoulder and weep.

"Don't cry, Lelia," whispered Elmira; "when you and Charles live in your log cabin together, in the wild woods, you'll forget all about me."

"Let me be the first to congratulate Mrs. Joseph Banks, on her new name," said Aunt Phillis, advancing and saluting the bride, with inimitable grace.

"Mrs. Joseph Banks!" repeated Mr. Banks. "Very good, young Mrs. Banks! Very good! By and by, there will be old Mrs. Banks—will there not, hey?" pinching Aunt Phillis' arm, who thought proper to resent the familiarity, by drawing away her arm and tossing up her head with unexpected disdain. The next moment, fearing she might offend him by her too manifest resentment of the odious cognomen, she looked back upon him, with a coquettish smile, and said something about his being a privileged wit.

The carriage rolled up to the door with a magnificent sweep. The bride and bridegroom were seated first—then Mr. Banks, who seemed to be completely cured of the gout, helped Aunt Phillis to ascend, who sprang up the steps, as light as a fawn, threw back

her veil and kissed her hand to those she was leaving behind. It was a long time before Mr. Banks was arranged to his own satisfaction, and it was not till Aunt Phillis had squeezed herself into the smallest possible compass, he declared himself comfortably seated.

"Fine horses these, brother," said he, putting his head out of the window; "sweep like the wind. Ride like a king! Poor Lelia! don't cry—wish there was room. Take you next time—bye, bye."

The noble horses, which had been pawing the ground, impatient of their long restraint, bounded forward, at the first touch of the whip, and the carriage was soon out of sight. But as long as it was seen, the white handkerchief of Aunt Phillis waved from the window, like an oriflamme of victory. The stage, which brought Mr. Clements and his son, was soon at the door.

"I do not think I can part with you, after all," said Mr. Manners, retaining Lelia in a parting embrace—"I shall be too lonely."

"Then come with us," said Mr. Clements, "and let me reciprocate, as far as I am able, the hospitality I have received under your roof."

"That cuts rather close," thought Mr. Manners.

"Come with us," said Charles. "Then Lelia will not carry a divided heart."

Lelia echoed these invitations most earnestly, and, to his own astonishment, he found himself in a few minutes seated in the stage-coach, at his daughter's



side, about to make an extempore visit to his poor relation.

As Aunt Phillis is in reality the heroine of this tale, we feel it a proper tribute of respect to follow her course, in preference to the unambitious Lelia. It is not our intention to follow the minutiae of a journey which required many days to accomplish, for we are as anxious as she was to reach the home which had so long been looming on the restless sea of her maiden fancy. The last day, their road lay through a rough, hilly country, which gave many a jolt to her weary sides, and aching limbs. They rode through leafless forests, which seemed stretching into "a boundless contiguity of space," and through which the wintry winds whistled, making most melancholy music. Long and anxiously did the bride real, and the *bride apparent*, gaze from the carriage windows, straining their eyes to catch a glimpse of the distant spires of Banksville, where they were to enjoy the realization of their golden dreams. It was a grey, misty, dreary looking day, and towards evening the mist condensed into clouds, and the clouds descended in a drizzling rain, which completely obscured the country, and made the travellers fold their cloaks more closely round them, and draw towards each other with more affectionate familiarity.

"Oh, I am so tired!" exclaimed Aunt Phillis, leaning her head against Mr. Banks' ample shoulder; "shall we never reach home? You told me three hours ago it was only ten miles to Banksville."

"Don't be impatient," replied he, "soon be there.

Chrrming place; get a fine supper; rest like princes."

It was a late, dark hour, when the travellers reached the termination of their journey. Aunt Phillis and Elmira had both fallen back into a deep slumber, from which they were scarcely aroused by the sudden cessation of the motion of the carriage, and the voice of Uncle Banks, bidding them wake up, and cheer up, for they had got home at last. With stiffened limbs, and bewildered capacities, the film of sleep still lingering on their eye-lids, they were assisted from the carriage, and led stumbling along over a rough pathway towards a low dwelling intrenched in a cluster of forest trees, whose branches made coarse net-work over the roof.

"Where are we going?" cried Aunt Phillis. "What sort of a place is this? Oh, dear!—I can scarcely see my hand before me."

"Never mind," said Uncle Banks; "see soon enough. Hallo, there"—giving a thundering rap at the door—"bring a light here. Ho—quick!—a light for the ladies!"

A heavy step was heard lingering near the door, which being swung open wide, displayed a large clumsy-formed girl, dressed in linsey-woolsey garments, with sleeves rolled up to her elbows, holding a candle in one hand, and shading her eyes with the other.

"La, Mr. Banks, if it isn't you! Bless my stars! here are ladies, sure enough!"

"Open the parlour directly. Run and make up a

fire—good fire—blazing fire”—cried Mr. Banks, taking the candle and leading the way for his shivering guests.

“What are you stopping for, at this ugly old place, when we are so near home?” asked Aunt Phillis, mechanically following him, while cold, fearful drops began to gather on her darkening brow.

“Joseph, I thought you said we were to get home to-night,” said Elmira, in a trembling, reproachful voice, sinking down into the first chair she saw, half dead with fatigue and indefinite apprehension.

“Home!” repeated Uncle Banks, rubbing his hands exultingly together, “and what should this be, but home? New place, to be sure—going to be a palace by-and-by—not quite finished yet. Welcome to Banksville, my dear—fine place, isn’t it, hey?”

“Home!” screamed Aunt Phillis, lifting up both hands almost as high as the ceiling—rolling her eyes round the unpapered and unpainted walls, up on the unlathed rafters, then into the huge chimney, where the large girl was piling pine knots higher than her head, and whose broad glare soon illuminated the whole apartment—“Home!—home!—did you say?”

“Yes, home!” shouted Uncle Banks, from the very top of his lungs. “Deaf all at once, hey? Good home as ever was—plenty of room—plenty of wood—plenty of things to eat. What more do you want? Come, take off your cloak—set down by the fire—no ceremony here.”

Aunt Phillis looked steadily in his face, without

winking—her eyes dilated to their utmost dimensions, for more than a minute, and he looked steadily at her, smiling and winking all the time. The girl in the chimney stopped blowing the fire, and looked from one to the other, grinning and coughing, displaying two full-length rows of unbroken ivory.

“Oh my stars,” shrieked Aunt Phillis, clapping both hands tightly on her head, and throwing herself back in a chair,—“Oh! my head—it will burst—I can’t breathe—I shall suffocate—I shall die. Here,” to the grinning girl, “unloosen my cloak—untie my bonnet—give me a glass of water.” The last words were uttered in a calmer voice. The idea, that notwithstanding the awful delusions respecting the splendour of Banksville, under which she had been labouring, she could induce him to build a house to her own taste, out of his hoarded treasures, came like a good angel and checked the outpouring of her anger. “It is very strange,” said she, in a hysterical giggle, “that a gentleman of your fortune should be willing to live so—so simply.”

“My fortune!” repeated Mr. Banks, “fortune enough. Own this lot and farm—plenty for me—all the rest a false report. No matter—thought I’d try my friends—make a frolic of it. No harm done—no sham here,” striking his hand on his expansive chest.

“But your carriage?” gasped Aunt Phillis.

“Borrowed.”

“Your fine clothes?”

“All borrowed—hey.”

Aunt Phillis started up on her feet, quivering with

passion. "You wretch—you monster," she exclaimed—"you deceiver—you jack-daw in peacock's plumes! I'll prosecute you for an impostor. I'll have you put in a penitentiary—set in the pillory—transported to Botany Bay. To entrap in this vile way my unsuspecting innocence. To lure me on to the brink of matrimony—to make me the laughing stock of the whole world."

Uncle Banks put his hands in his pockets and began one of his silent laughs.

"To think of my waiting upon you as if you were the grand Sultan himself," continued she, after taking a fresh inspiration. "Of my tending your old gouty feet—yea, holding them in my very lap."

"Hey diddle, diddle, the cat's in the fiddle," cried he, getting up and frisking a little, to show the soundness of his limbs. "Good feet as any body's feet. No more gout than you have. Ready for a reel this minute."

"Take us home directly, unfeeling wretch," cried the unhappy spinster. "I'll never sleep in this miserable hovel—I'll perish in the woods first."

Uncle Banks, who had enjoyed sufficiently the rage and mortification of Aunt Phillis, seemed to feel real compassion for the distress of the weeping Elmira. "Poor girl," said he, kindly patting her on the shoulder, "don't take on so—Joe loves you—he's young and strong—be a rich man yet. Every tree of the West has a treasure of gold in its trunk. I'm getting old—tired of the seas—lost my money—wanted at home—wanted rest—folks heard I'd got a great

fortune—it wasn't my fault—didn't mean to make you unhappy—thought you loved Joe—good boy—make you a good husband."

Elmira, who, weary and half stunned, seemed in a passive state, did not answer, but when Joe, encouraged by his father, ventured to sit down by her and take her hand in his, and she did not snatch it away, Uncle Banks thought it a propitious omen, and drawing the back of his hand across his eyes, he did not speak for a few moments.

Aunt Phillis, completely exhausted, leaned against the wall. Her bonnet, partly untied, rested on the back of her head; her turban, disarranged by the jolting of the carriage and her own wrathful gestures, was poked on one side, revealing one or two stiff grey locks, while her long dark ringlets, uncurled by the rain, clung to her cheeks and chin with mournful adhesiveness. The corners of her mouth were drawn down into acute angles; the corners of her eyebrows lifted up in corresponding angles in an opposite direction; her nose looked sharpened into a severer point. Shakspeare knew nothing of melancholy madness. He had never seen Aunt Phillis Manners.

Notwithstanding the rough appearance of this lodge, in the wilderness of the boundless west, where the storm-wrecked and eccentric mariner had found a sheltered haven of rest, it was comfortable and looked even cheerful, illumined as it now was by the blazing pine knots, which crackled and corruscated in the vast chimney, and filled every nook and crevice with

the brightness of noon-day. A good substantial supper was soon spread before them by the "maid of all-work," but no one but Uncle Banks tasted a morsel. He seemed to have lost entirely the fastidiousness of his appetite, and eat of every dish with the keenest relish.

Aunt Phillis did not prowl into the woods, as she had threatened, but threw herself down on her humble bed in a state resembling despair. The cup of her wrath had foamed over, and she was now drinking in silence the bitter dregs; the veriest lees of the wine of life. She felt, as we may suppose, as the æronaut feels, who, after rising majestically into the blue convexity of Heaven, leaving far below the grossness and opacity of earth, breathing the elasticity of a rarer, purer atmosphere, almost hearing the music of the empyrean, and catching glimpses of the palace of the Sun, when, suddenly, the gas explodes, the airy chariot falls, and he comes tumbling headlong from his glorious height, into some muddy pool, with bruised frame, broken bones and shaking brains.

For hours she lay, planning schemes of unexampled vengeance, which for variety and originality, might have shamed the torments of the fabled Tartarus, till an appalling consciousness of her own impotence, and the ridiculousness of her wrongs, checked the ingenuity of her revenge. She resolved at length to get home, as speedily and quietly as possible, to say nothing to her brother, or any of her friends, of her disappointment, and thus screen herself from the derision which she knew would be her portion.

Elmira's feelings were not deep, nor her passions strong. Her character had been moulded by circumstances, and it was easily remoulded. After the first ebullition of sorrow and chagrin, convinced that her destiny was fixed, she submitted with a comparative good grace—determining, in her own mind, that her father should build her a fine house, and that the world should never know how deceived she had been. Besides, Joe was so really affectionate and kind, she could not continue sullen and resentful—and ill-humour looked so unlovely and forbidding in her aunt, that she struggled against its mastery.

"Carry you home again," said Mr. Banks, "in the same carriage that brought you—don't want to keep folks against their will—ought to be glad of such a fine ride. Daughter may go too, till we get her a house built. Be happy as a queen yet—mustn't be angry at uncle—all for the best—married Joe—not his purse. Fine boy—hey?"

With what different emotions did Aunt Phillis find herself seated in the same carriage with the same party, the day but one after her arrival. She wouldn't condescend to sit on the same seat with Mr. Banks, but making Elmira occupy that post of honour, to the great displeasure of Cousin Joe, placed herself opposite, and if the lightning of her eyes could have withered, Mr. Banks would have been nothing but a shrivelled scroll. He seemed in imperturbable good humour, singing and laughing so merrily, that Elmira caught the infection, and smiled and even laughed. The third day of their journey, the aspect of the

country changed. It was no longer the same road they had travelled before—Aunt Phillis noticed the change, and peevishly asked to what new cities they were going.

"Going to stop to-night at a friend's," answered Uncle Banks. "Good friend—loaned me this carriage—lent me my velvet suit and jewels—capital fellow—rich as a Jew—lives like a prince—catch *him* perhaps—hey?"

Aunt Phillis disdained to answer, supposing he was going to take her to another log-cabin and some companion of congenial coarseness. Night came on, a clear, cold, moonlight night, when the atmosphere itself looked all white and silvery, and the pebbly ground sparkled like diamonds. The horses went faster and faster, and struck fire from their resounding hoofs. Uncle Banks' spirits rose at every turning of the wheels. He sang every verse of "Cease rude Boreas," "Black-eyed Susan," and "The Jolly Tar," keeping time with his feet and hands, while Aunt Phillis kept dodging her head this way and that, and drawing her feet under her clothes to avoid coming in contact with him. At length the carriage rolled over a smoother road—regular rows of lofty trees, grand and lordly even in the wintry nakedness, skirted the way-side—the illuminated windows of a large white dwelling, with white columns supporting a piazza, that surrounded the whole building, over which perennial vines were clustering, became defined on the luminous back-ground of the starry heaven.

"This is a fine house, to be sure," said Aunt Phillis,

in a more gracious tone, as the carriage stopped at the door. "It is pleasant to see a Christian-looking habitation once more."

"No need of knocking," said Uncle Banks, leading the way up the flight of marble steps, to the entrance—"old acquaintance—no ceremony."

He entered the hall, then throwing back the folding doors, displayed to the astonished eyes of Aunt Phillis, a scene which she thought some wizard wand had conjured. Seated at a table in the centre of the apartment, beneath the soft lustre of a moonlight lamp, sat her brother, reading a newspaper, as much at ease, as if he had been domesticated there all his life, and directly opposite was Mr. Clements, so intently engaged with a book that he did not notice the opening of the door. And on a sofa, a little in the back-ground of the picture, Charles and Lelia were sitting side by side, engaged in such earnest and interesting conversation, it is doubtful whether the entrance of Xerxes and his army would have diverted their attention from each other.

"Well done, kinsfolk!" exclaimed Uncle Banks, giving his brother a rousing slap on the shoulder. "Can't you see a body, hey? Brought Cousin Phillis to make you a visit. Wasn't pleased with Banksville, may be she'll like Clementsville better. Ha—little sweetheart playing puss in the corner there. Come and kiss your uncle."

"Welcome, Cousin Phillis," said Mr. Clements, shaking her cordially by the hand, "many thanks for this unexpected honour. I shall be most happy to

repay you, according to my poor ability, some of the obligations I owe you."

"So you've all been making a fool of me," cried she, unable to suppress the overflowing of her passions. "Pretending to be poor, when you're rich, and rich when you're poor, just to make a gull of me—and that little hypocrite knew it all the time," shaking her forefinger at Lelia, with a familiar gesture, "she knew it all. She acted her part as well as the rest of you. You've every one been in a conspiracy against me. Yes—every one—not excepting my own brother."

Here she threw herself back on the sofa and covering her face with her handkerchief, rocked to and fro, in hysterical agony.

"There is no use in recrimination now, sister," said Mr. Manners. "We have both been taught a good lesson, by which I hope I shall profit, as long as I live. But you must not accuse Lelia. She was the only one of us, who loved her uncle and cousin for themselves alone; and verily, she hath found her reward," added he, giving Charles a look, that might have made any young man proud.

"Come, Cousin Phillis," said Mr. Clements, "let us forget and forgive. We have all been playing a little farce, which has made us somewhat better acquainted with human nature, and with the mysteries of our own hearts. Having received a splendid accession to my fortunes, while still a resident in a foreign land, which rumour, by mistake, gave to my sailor brother here, I yielded to his whim, and allowed

myself to be thought poor and himself rich, as had been previously reported to you. I had some misgivings as to the propriety of the deception; but since I have discovered such a treasury of disinterested affection, in this beloved child," drawing Lelia to his bosom as he spoke—"this child, who is as much lifted above hypocrisy as the heavens are above the earth, and since I have secured the happiness of my son, by a promised union with so much loveliness and virtue, I cannot regret the masquerade we wore. Yes, Lelia—I would not exchange this coat, this dress given to your *poor* uncle, for the ermine of royalty. Its history shall be recorded in the family archive and handed down even to your children's children. El-mira, your husband is not a poor man, for he shall share of my inheritance, and yet make himself a name and a fame in the growing West."

"Come, Cousin Phillis," cried Uncle Banks. "Rub out old scores. Kiss and be friends. Don't spoil your eyes. Catch a rich sweetheart yet—maybe. Hain't got the chink—can't help it—don't want it—clear head—sound limbs, stout heart—good conscience—wealth enough for me. Isn't that enough—hey?"

## The Mob Cap; or, my Grandmother's Trunk.

It was past midnight, and the moon had gone down when the stage stopped at Edward Stanley's lodgings, who was about to visit his village home. The lamps threw a strong glare on the pavements, but the interior of the vehicle was in such deep shade, he could but imperfectly distinguish his fellow travellers.

He observed, however, that several young gentlemen occupied the front and middle seats, while an old woman, muffled in a cloak, sat alone on the back one. She turned her head sharply round as he entered, and the light glimmering under her large hood was brightly reflected from a pair of spectacles of such spacious dimensions, they seemed to cover her whole face, or at least all the face that was visible through the wide-plaited border of a mob cap. Edward took the only vacant seat in the stage, at her side, with a very respectful bow, which was received with something between a hem and a cough, a sound diverting in itself, and rendered still more so, by its echo from the opposite seat; for the young gentlemen seemed determined to derive all the amusement possible from their antiquated companion. Edward had a convivial spirit, but he had too deep a reverence for age ever to make it a subject for mirth. It was in itself a sufficient guarantee for veneration, even when unaccompanied by those traits which impart a beauty to the

faded brow, and to the hoary head a crown of glory. The recollection of his own grandmother, too, who had died since his absence from home—one of those fine, dignified relics of the majestic simplicity of olden time, which reminds one so forcibly of the degeneracy of modern days—gave a tenderness to his manners, in addressing an aged person, which was peculiarly engaging in the present instance, from the effect of contrast.

"Take care, grandmother," said the young men opposite, as the stage jolted over a huge stone, "take care of your spectacles. We shall upset now, depend upon it."

"No thanks to you if we don't," cried she, muttering, in the indistinct accents of age. Then turning towards Edward, she continued, "It is really refreshing to see a well-behaved, decent young gentleman, after enduring the impertinence of the dandies and jacknapes. Never mind, you may laugh now as loud as you please; but if you live, you will be old yourself one of these days."

She put her hand into her pocket, which seemed unfathomable in depth, and drawing out a snuff-box, after rapping it several times, she presented it to Edward, who was obliged from politeness to take a pinch, and all the passengers petitioning for a similar favour, a sneezing concert commenced, in which the old lady herself acted the most sonorous part. After the mirth occasioned by this chorus had subsided, she dropped her box into her pocket, and it sunk like a pebble descending into a vault. Edward began to



enjoy his journey exceedingly; he never felt disposed to sleep in a stage coach, and the old lady declared herself of the same temperament, though he gallantly offered his shoulder as a pillow, to the great amusement of the others, who were, ere long, nodding their heads to and fro, occasionally knocking their heads against each other, or reclining backwards in more unsocial attitudes. Edward and his muffled companion fell into the most familiar and agreeable conversation. She seemed very shrewd and original in her remarks, and exercised the privilege of age in inquiring his name, the place of his residence, &c.

"Ah," said she, "I knew you had a mother and sisters—or a sister whom you loved, from your kindness to me, an old woman, and a stranger. Heaven be blessed for the influence of gentle ones on the heart of man. And you are going to the village of —. Do you know any thing of the Widow Clifton, daughter of Squire Lee, who lives somewhere in those parts?"

"Not personally—but report says she is such a gay dashing character. I suppose she will find herself very much out of place in a country town. I hear, through my sister, that she is to take possession of her late father's dwelling, which has been fitted up for her accommodation in quite a princely style. You speak as if you knew her, madam."

"Yes, for I was a great friend to her grandmother; a fine old lady as ever lived, a thousand time handsomer than Gertrude—but very likely you may not

agree with me. Young eyes see differently from old ones."

"Is she young?" asked Edward.

"Yes, she is scarcely twenty, for she married, poor thing, at a very early age, and was left a widow soon after. She has need of more discretion than she has now, or ever will have."

"I should like to see this gay young widow," said Edward, musingly, the vision of a pair of heavenly blue eyes that he had seen stealing softly before him, "but it is not likely that we shall become acquainted, for my mother and sister live very retired, and when I am at home I devote myself to them."

It was surprising in what confidential terms he was addressing his new acquaintance, and how entirely he forgot to ask her name and residence, though he had so freely imparted his own.

As the morning air came chill and dewy over the hill, she drew her cloak more closely around her, pulled down her hood, and seemed drowsy and silent. Edward was not sorry to be left a while to his own reflections. He thought of the mild eyes of his mother, at that very moment, perhaps, turned towards the window, anxiously watching his coming, of the more eager anticipations of his only sister, and more than all, he thought upon "the witching smile that caught his youthful fancy."

He was roused from his reveries by the sudden stopping of the stage, and he found he was to be separated from his ancient friend. Jumping out with as much alacrity as if he were in attendance on youth



and beauty, he assisted her as she descended with slow and difficult steps; and opening the gate for her to pass, gave her a cordial and respectful farewell.

"I shall not soon forget you, young gentleman," said she, holding out her tremulous hand, "and if the time ever comes when I can serve you, you will find the aged can remember the kindness of youth."

Resuming his seat, his thoughts winged their way towards the home he was now rapidly approaching. In two or three hours, he began to distinguish the trees familiar to his boyhood. A little farther, a majestic elm stretched its lordly branches over the street, they passed, on either side, the landmark of his school-day pastimes. Then a white house glimmered through the green foliage that overshadowed it,—and a moment more, Edward was in the arms of his mother, with his sister clinging round his neck. An only son and brother, returned after twelve months' absence, to beings whose best affections were garnered in him, might reasonably call forth warm and joyous emotions. A shade, however, passed over their brows, as the saddened glance of Edward rested on the easy chair, where he had last beheld that venerable form with placid brows, crowned with living silver, now laid low in the dust—and they all *remembered the dead*.

A year's residence in the heart of a city, would naturally produce some change in a young man, as yet only in the morning of manhood, and as Clara's admiring eyes ran over the face and figure of her brother, she blushed at her own rusticity. There was an

indescribable something in his air and manner, that told he had been in a region different from her own, and a shadow of awe began to steal over the deep love she felt for him. Mrs. Stanley, whose chastened and pious thoughts were dwelling on the inner man, rejoiced that his heart remained unchilled during his intercourse with the world, for the fountain of filial tenderness was still full and gushing over.

Edward Stanley was poor—that is, he had only his own inborn energies to carry him through the world. He had just completed his studies as a lawyer, having finished his last year with one of the most distinguished members of the bar, a friend of his late father, who, though he died poor in one sense of the word, was rich in the good opinions of his fellow-men. Edward was resolved it should prove a year of probation, and adhered to his determination not to suffer even the holiest interest of nature to turn him aside from his steadfast course. The trial was past—he was admitted to the bar—and now felt privileged to rest and refresh himself for a while at the well-springs of the heart.

That evening, as he looked abroad and saw the moon sending down such rills of light through the deep shades of the landscape, he thought how beautiful Fanny Morton had looked when she stood, a year ago, in the midst of such silver waves, and he longed to know how she would look then, standing in the self-same moonbeams. The wish was easily accomplished, for her father's house was but a short distance from his own, and he soon found himself near the threshold.

The house was situated a little retreating from the street, and the path that led to it was soft and grassy, lying too in a thick shadow, so his approach was not perceived. There she stood, almost in the same attitude, leaning against the door, looking upwards with eyes so deeply, beautifully blue, they seemed to have borrowed the colour from the night heaven to which their gaze was directed. Her fair, flaxen hair glittered in the moonlight with a golden lustre, brightly contrasting with the pure whiteness of a brow, where the serenity of youth and innocence was now softly reposing.

"Fanny!" said Edward, emerging from the shadow; and she sprang forward at the well-known voice, with a bounding step, and a joyous smile.

"Edward, I am so glad you are come."

Her manner was so frank and affectionate, it relieved him from the agitation he felt in addressing her. Perhaps he felt a disappointment in meeting her childish expression of pleasure, instead of the deep silence of joy, for it is certain the romance of his feelings considerably subsided, and he uttered some commonplace sayings, instead of the high-wrought sentiments in which he had been indulging. He had never told Fanny in so many words that he loved her, but they had lived in almost daily interchange of offices prompted by affection. In absence he had blended her image with every memory of the past and every hope of the future, and now in her presence, he acknowledged that she was fairer and lovelier than even the visions his fancy had drawn. The people of the

village seeing Fanny again the constant companion of Edward and Clara Stanley, as in former times, prophesied a speedy union, though they dwelt on the excessive imprudence of the match, as they were both too poor to think of marrying, and many declared Fanny to be no better than a piece of painted wax-work, fit only to be looked at and admired.

They were returning one evening, about sunset, from a walk in the woodland. Fanny was literally covered with garlands, which Edward and Clara had woven, and with her hat swinging in her hand, and her fair locks unbound, she formed the most picturesque feature of a landscape, then rich in all the glories of summer. They turned aside from the path, for the trampling of horses' feet were behind them.

"Look, brother, look!" exclaimed Clara, as a lady, in company with two gentlemen, rode gaily by. She was dressed in green. Her long riding-dress swept far below her feet, and waving feathers of the same colour mingled with the folds of a veil which floated lightly on the breeze. She turned and looked earnestly at Fanny, who, blushing at her fantastical appearance, drew behind Clara, when the veil of the stranger suddenly loosened, and, fluttering, fell at Edward's feet. Never was a fairer opening for gallantry. The lady checked her spirited horse, and, bending gracefully forward, received the veil from the hands of Edward, with a smile and a bow that would have repaid any man for a greater exertion. Her complexion was dark, but richly coloured with the warm hues of ex-

ercise and health; and when she smiled, her eyes were so brilliantly black, and her teeth so glitteringly white, that Clara could talk of nothing else for an hour after she reached home—and Edward caught himself wondering several times, who the lady of the green plumes could be.

"Yes," said he, suddenly, when he saw, at night, lights gleaming from the windows of the great white house on the hill—"It must be Mrs. Clifton, the dashing widow."

And Mrs. Clifton it proved to be, whose arrival caused no slight sensation in this quiet village—Edward and Fanny were quite forgotten in the superior claims of one, who, though among them, was not of them. One represented her as proud as Lucifer, sweeping through the streets, with her officer-like cap and feathers,—another, as a lioness, leaping her horse over hedges and walls. Some represented her as dark as an Ethiopian, terrible and grand—and others, as beautiful as an angel, and blithe as a wood-nymph. Meanwhile the unconscious object of these contradictory and mostly invidious remarks, continued her rides over hill and dale with unwearied activity, and sometimes she appeared in a splendid carriage, with a footman, who was said to be dressed in livery, though he wore a suit of sober gray.

What was the astonishment of Clara Stanley, when she saw one morning this splendid carriage stop at her own door, and Mrs. Clifton herself descend from it! Clara's next feeling was deep mortification; for both her mother and herself were dressed in plain

calico mourning frocks, and the room was in a state of particular disorder, for she was occupied in cutting and arranging work, and her brother had covered the table with papers he was about to examine.

"Oh, Edward," cried Clara, "if there's not Mrs. Clifton! what shall we do?"

"Do?" said he, laughing and starting up eagerly—"Why ask her to come in;" and with an ease and self-possession that almost provoked the mortified Clara, he met this startling visitor at the threshold.

She introduced herself with so much grace and politeness, and fell into conversation so rapidly and simply, apologizing for what she feared might be deemed an intrusion, but expressing an earnest wish to become acquainted with neighbours in whose society she anticipated so much pleasure, so naturally and sincerely, that Clara's burning cheeks began to cool, and her confused senses to be sufficiently collected to appreciate so signal an honour. Mrs. Stanley was too truly refined and well bred to share in her daughter's embarrassment. She was not ashamed of the simplicity of their dress, and she did not look upon the proofs of Clara's industry and Edward's literature, scattered about the room, as at all disgraceful. Moreover, she was very proud of her son, and thought she had never seen him appear to such an advantage as at this moment, when engaged in animated conversation with this graceful and charming lady. Mrs. Clifton admired the garden, the vines that made such fairy lattice-work around the windows, the pictures that hung upon the walls, till every thing

around her became exalted in Clara's eyes, with charms unknown before. When she arose to depart, she urged Mrs. Stanley so warmly to visit her, and to suffer her to see much of Clara, it was impossible not to believe she was soliciting a favour. She was so lonely, she said—the friends who had accompanied her were returned, and she had nothing but her books and harp for companions. Her harp! Clara was crazy to hear a harp. The very idea carried her at once into the fairy land of romance, of Ossian's heroines and Milton's angels.

"Is she not the most charming woman you ever saw in your life?" exclaimed Clara, the moment she had left them. "I quite forgot my calico frock and these linen shreds, long before she was gone. Did you ever see any one so polite and condescending? I wonder how she came to select us from all the village, to call upon," and she smiled at the importance it would give them in the eyes of their neighbours.

"I am not much surprised," said Mrs. Stanley, "as her father and yours were on intimate terms, and it is probable she has taken pains to ascertain his friends. She had just married when Mr. Lee came into the country, and as she went immediately abroad, she never visited the place during her father's life. She married very young, and I think I have heard she was not happy in her union. She certainly does not seem inconsolable at her husband's death."

"Is she not delightful, Edward?" continued Clara, in a perfect fever of admiration. "Did you ever

see such eyes and teeth? and though she is dark, her complexion is so glowing and clear, I don't think she would look as handsome if she were fairer. I wonder if she will marry again?"

"You wonder at so many things," replied Edward, laughing, "you must live in a perpetual state of astonishment. But I do think, Clara, that Mrs. Clifton is very delightful, and very charming, and graceful, and I hope my dear little rustic sister will try to imitate her graces."

Edward would never have breathed this unfortunate wish had he anticipated how faithfully poor Clara would have obeyed his injunction.

The visit was soon returned, and if Clara admired her new friend before, she was now completely fascinated. She "saw the white rising of her hands upon the harp," and heard the mellow tones of a voice tuned to the sweetest modulation of art. The rich furniture, the superb curtains, the paintings in massy gilt frames, seemed to her unaccustomed eye equal to oriental splendour, and Mrs. Clifton some eastern enchantress, presiding over the scene, with more than magic power. Edward Stanley was passionately fond of music. He had never heard it in such perfection. But there was a charm in Mrs. Clifton's conversation even superior to her music. It was full of spirit, sensibility, enthusiasm, and refinement. Then its perfect adaptedness to all around her! Every one talked better with her than with any one else, and felt, when they quitted her society, that they had never been so agreeable before; confessing,

at the same time, that they had never met with any one half so pleasing as herself. She certainly did flatter a little; that is, she told very pleasant truths, with a most bewitching smile, and another thing, which, perhaps, was the great secret of her attraction, she seemed completely to forget herself, in her interest for those around her.

It is very certain Mrs. Stanley's family thought more of their new neighbour that night, than their old ones. Even Edward forgot to dream of the blue eyes of Fanny Morton. His conscience reproached him for the oblivion; and when he saw the unenvying interest with which she listened to Clara's praises of the dashing widow, as she was called by the villagers, he admired the sweetness and simplicity of a character, pure as the untracked snow. He admired, but, for the first time, he felt a want in this sweet character. He had never discovered before, that Fanny was deficient in sensibility, that the shadows of feeling seldom passed over her celestial countenance. He found, too, a dearth of thought and variety in her conversation, of which he had never been sensible before. A pang of self-accusation shot through his heart, as he made these discoveries, and feeling as if he were guilty of injustice, his attentions became still more frequent, and he tried to restrain his restless and wandering thoughts.

Clara sat one morning in a deep reverie. "Mother," said she, at length, "do you remember that full crim-

son damask petticoat, grandmother left me as a memento of old times?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Stanley, surprised at the suddenness of the question, "why do you ask?"

"I was thinking it would make some beautiful window curtains for our parlour. The sun shines in so warm it is really uncomfortable to sit there, and the reflection of red curtains is very beautifying to the complexion."

"Ah! Clara," cried her brother, "you never discovered how uncomfortable it was, till you saw Mrs. Clifton's fine curiains. You forget the blinds, and the vines, and the rose-bushes. Pray have more reverence for dear grandmother's ancient relics."

Clara blushed, and was considerably disconcerted, but nevertheless continued her dreams of improvement. Her latent love for show and splendour began to glimmer forth and illuminate many an airy castle she amused herself in building. To imitate Mrs. Clifton was now the end and aim of her existence. She practised her step, her air, her smile, before the looking-glass, in her own chamber, till from a very simple and unaffected girl, she became conspicuously the reverse. She strung every window with *Æolian* harps, and tried to sing in unison when the wild winds swept the chords—but they disdained the harmony of the human voice, and mocked at her efforts. Edward felt quite distressed at an effect so contrary to his wishes, but he concealed his chagrin under a good-humoured ridicule, which somewhat checked her progress in the

graces. Once, when they were to accompany Mrs. Clifton in an excursion on horseback, and the lady, arrayed in her suit of forest green, was already waiting their motion, he knew not whether he was most amused or grieved, to see Clara descend in a dress of the same colour, in which the imitation was too obvious and too defective not to border on the ridiculous, with a green veil wreathed around the crown of her bonnet, and suffered to stream back behind, in the form of a feather or plume. Though the affection of her brother would not allow him to wound her feelings, by making her fully aware of her folly, and he chose rather gently to lead her back to true simplicity and good sense, she did not escape a severer lash from those who envied her the distinction of Mrs. Clifton's acquaintance, and who revenged themselves on her damask curtains, Æolian harps, and new-born airs. Her present ambition was to possess a gold chain, an ornament she deemed indispensable to the perfection of a lady's dress. She did not aspire to so magnificent a one as wreathed the graceful neck of Mrs. Clifton, but she thought she would be perfectly happy with one of far inferior value surrounding her own. She had a long string of large gold beads, a parting gift from her sainted grandmother, an ornament too obsolete for wear, and which she had often sighed to convert into modern jewelry. An opportunity occurred, at the very moment, of all others, she most desired it. Mrs. Clifton was to give a party. The day before the event, Clara was examining her simple wardrobe, trying to decide on the important articles

of dress, and mourning over her slender stock of finery, when a pedler stopped at the door, with a trunk filled with jewelry and trinkets. He spread them before her admiring eyes, and when she hesitated and regretted—he offered to take any old ornaments in exchange, holding up, at the same time, a glittering chain, the very article for which her vitiated fancy was yearning. The temptation was irresistible, and, unfortunately, she was alone. She flew to her little trunk of treasures, drew out her grandmother's beads, and the pedler's eyes brightened as he saw the pure rich old fashioned gold, knowing their superior value to his own gilded trifles.

"Will you exchange that chain for these?" said she, in a faltering voice; for in spite of her vain desire, the very act seemed a sacrilege to her conscience.

"That would not be an even bargain," he replied; and it was true, for the chain was nothing but brass, thinly washed with gold. Clara hung down her head. In proportion to the difficulty of obtaining the bauble, her longing increased.

"That is a very pretty little trunk," cried the pedler, "it would be very convenient to hold my jewels. If you will throw that in, we will strike a bargain."

Now the trunk was not Clara's. It belonged to her brother. It was the last keepsake bequeathed to him by this same grandmother, whose legacies of love Clara was converting to purposes of vanity and pride. There was a letter in it, directed to him, with a clause



on the envelope, that he was not to open it till he was of age, *unless* he should find himself in some emergency, and especially in need of counsel. The old lady was supposed to possess considerable property, and it was also believed that Edward would be her heir. On her death, however, these expectations proved vain, and her grandson did not honour her memory the less because he was not enriched by her loss. He took the letter as a sacred bequest, wondering much at the singular injunction, and told Clara to keep the trunk for him, as it was of no use to him, and she would preserve it with more care. Clara knew it was only intrusted to her keeping; and she turned pale at the thought of betraying a brother's trust; but she repeated to herself it was of no possible use to him, that he would probably never inquire for it, and it could not hurt her dear grandmother's feelings, who was sleeping beneath the clods of the valley. It was a thing, too, of so little consequence—and the chain was so beautiful. She emptied the trunk of its contents, gave it hastily into the pedler's hands, with the beads which had remained on her grandmother's neck till she died, and gathering up the chain, felt,—instead of the joy of triumph—self-upbraiding and shame. She would have recalled the act; but it was too late—the pedler was gone. So poor was the gratification of vanity—but the bitter consequence of a deviation from rectitude she was yet to experience.

When arrayed for the party, she put a shawl carefully around her neck before she made her appear-

ance, to conceal her ill-gotten splendour—but the consciousness of having something to conceal from the affectionate eyes that were bent upon her, gave a disturbed and anxious expression to her countenance that did not escape the observation of her brother; and when she saw Fanny in the unadorned simplicity of her own loveliness, she secretly loathed the acquisition for which she had sacrificed her principles of right.

"Let me see you, Clara, before you start," said Mrs. Stanley—and she added, smiling, "I hope you have not tried to look too well."

"Oh, pray, mother take care, cried Clara, shrinking from the dreaded hand that touched her shawl; "it will tumble my dress to take it off now. It is only my plain muslin frock," and hurrying away, with blushes and trepidation, she felt that her punishment was begun.

Arrived at Mrs. Clifton's—she became still more dissatisfied, when she saw their elegant hostess, dressed in the simplest attire, consistent with fashion and taste, with no ornament but a cluster of roses, wreathed amidst locks of gypsy blackness and oriental abundance. Her piercing eye rested a moment on the beautiful Fanny, then flashed towards Edward, with a very peculiar expression. He understood their meaning, and an undefinable sensation of pain and displeasure oppressed him. Mrs. Clifton was too polite to confine her attentions to those she most wished to distinguish, but moved amongst her guests, endeavouring, as far as possible, to adapt herself to

their different capacities and tastes. She had invited her father's friends, wishing extremely to make them her own, and to convince them that she valued their sympathy and good will.

"You seem dispirited this evening, Mr. Stanley," said she, as Edward, unusually silent, stood leaning against the harp, from which he had more than once heard thrilling music; "perhaps I ought to say, pre-occupied. It may be wise to abstract the mind in the midst of a throng, but I am afraid it is rather selfish."

"I should think the wisdom consisted in the subject of the abstraction," replied Edward, "and I believe I am as unwise as I am selfish."

"I do not think so," said Mrs. Clifton, and she looked at Fanny, whose serene countenance was beaming from the opposite side of the room. "Beauty, whether the subject of abstraction or contemplation, fills the mind with the most delightful ideas, and elevates it by the conviction that the hand that *made it is divine*. I do not agree with the moralist who would degrade it as a vain and valueless possession. The woman who possesses it, may exercise a boundless influence over the heart of man, and if exerted aright how glorious may be the result!—Often and often have I sighed for the celestial gift—yet, perhaps, I should be neither better nor happier."

"You!" exclaimed Edward.

It was but a monosyllable, but the most laboured panegyric could not have been half so expressive. The clear olive of Mrs. Clifton's cheek was coloured

with a brighter hue as she languidly resumed—"I did not solicit a compliment, but its brevity recommends yours. I know I am not handsome. I cannot be if beauty depends upon lilies and roses. In the gay and heartless world I have learned to shine as others do, and have tried the rules of art. My life has been passed much with strangers. You, Mr. Stanley, surrounded as you are, by all the sweet charities of a home, living in its warm and sunny atmosphere, you do not know the coldness and the loneliness of the brotherless and sisterless heart."

She spoke in a tone of deep feeling, and cast down her eyes with a deep expression of profound melancholy. Edward did not attempt to reply—he could not embody the new and overpowering emotions that were filling his soul, and he would not utter the common-place language of admiration. He felt like a man who had all his life been walking in darkness, and a dream, and had all at once awakened in a blaze of light. Several now gathered around Mrs. Clifton, entreating her to play; and Edward availed himself of the opportunity of drawing back, where he could listen, unseen by her, to the melodious songstress of the hour. He looked at Fanny, who was now near the instrument, and compared the calm feeling of happiness he had enjoyed in her society to the tumultuous tide that was now rushing through his heart.

"I have loved Fanny like a brother," thought he,



"ignorant of a deeper passion. And now I am a man and a fool——."

A hand was laid upon his arm. "Brother, are you not well? You look pale to-night." Clara was looking anxiously in his face, and he saw that her own was flushed with excitement.

"Yes, Clara, I am well—but what has disturbed you? Indeed I noticed before we left home that something seemed to weigh upon your spirits. Tell me the cause."

He drew her hand affectionately through his arm, and for the first time noticed her new ornament.

"It is not the weight of this new chain that oppresses you," said he, lifting it from her neck—"though it does feel rather magnificent. You have never showed me this new gift of yours. Who could have been the donor?"—and he thought of Mrs. Clifton.

"Do not speak of it here," whispered Clara, with so much embarrassment, it confirmed Edward's suspicions with regard to the donor, and though he regretted the nature of the obligation, he could not but think it was prompted by kindness to an observation of Clara's imitative decorations. The truth was, Clara had been exceedingly annoyed by the questions she could not, or rather would not answer.

Some one had suggested that it was a present from Mrs. Clifton, and though she did not affirm it, actually, she was glad to admit the idea, as an escape from further persecution on the subject.

Still her conscience writhed under the implied falsehood, and she dreaded its detection. To add to her mortification, she overheard some one remark "that Clara Stanley need not put on so many airs about her new chain, for it was nothing but pinch-beck, and had a strong smell of brass."

She rejoiced when the hour of retiring arrived; and when she reached home, she ran up stairs, went to bed, and cried herself to sleep. Poor Clara! she awakened that night from a terrible fit of the nightmare, for she dreamed that her grandmother's icy hands were groping about her neck for the beads she had bartered, that the cold grasp grew tighter and tighter, her breath shorter and shorter, till she screamed and awoke. She dreaded the next day her brother's questioning about the mysterious chain; but, absorbed in his own deep, overmastering emotions, he forgot the subject when the glittering bauble was removed from before his eyes. From this time a change was observable in his character. He became as silent and abstracted as he had before been gay and communicative. He no longer talked of Mrs. Clifton, and even to Fanny he was cold and constrained. Fanny preserved the same equanimity of feeling, though she missed Edward's vivacity and smiles, and openly lamented the transformation. She looked rather more serious than usual, but the azure of her eye was undimmed, and the soft rose of her cheek remained undiminished in bloom. Edward turned from the sameness and lustre of her countenance, to gaze upon

the changing face that "pale passion loved"—and while he acknowledged the hopelessness of his infatuation, he brooded over it, till it enervated all the energies of his soul. It was fortunate for his mind, that domestic circumstances of a perplexing nature roused it into exercise. Some very unexpected claims were made against the estate. Mr. Stanley had died suddenly, and left his affairs considerably involved, but his family now believed every thing was settled, and that the small property which remained was all their own. With the strictest economy it was just sufficient for a genteel support, and that was all. They had no means of meeting this unexpected exigency, but by the sale of the house—a sorrowful expedient, for it was endeared by every association connected with a husband's and a father's love—besides it was their home, and where should they look for another? Edward remembered the letter of his grandmother. He wanted but a few months of being of age, and the hour of trouble had arrived. He opened and read it, then gave it into his mother's hands with a countenance illuminated with joy.

"It is all well, dear mother—more than well—though dead she yet continues her guardianship of love. Clara, where is the trunk whose value I have just learned? It will save us from ruin."

Clara looked aghast.

"The trunk!" stammered she—"what good can it do us?"

"Read that letter—it will explain it."

The explanation may be given to the reader in fewer words. The trunk contained a false bottom, in which the good lady had placed deeds and papers, containing an amount of property which made a rich legacy to her grandson. Knowing the temptations to which youth is exposed, and knowing too that necessity calls forth the noblest powers of mankind; she did not wish him to know of the existence of this property till he became of age; and being somewhat eccentric in her character, and fond of surprises, she had adopted this singular method of bequeathing to him her fortune. Clara read the letter, and sat like a statue of stone. She wished the earth to open and swallow her, the mountains to fall and crush her to atoms, to save her from the remorse and shame that had overtaken her.

"Clara, what is the matter?" said Edward, sitting down by her side; "can you not go for the trunk, Clara?"

The unhappy girl tried to speak, but only uttered a piercing shriek, and fell prostrate on the floor.—Excessively alarmed, they raised and endeavoured to bring her to composure, but she continued to wring her hands and exclaimed—

"Oh, what have I done! what have I done!"

They gathered at length from her broken sentences, the extent of their misfortune. The treasure was lost, irredeemably lost, for it would be impossible to trace the course of one who led an itinerant life, and was probably now in some remote part

of the country. If it ever were discovered, it would probably be at some distant day, and the demand was immediate and pressing. Neither Mrs. Stanley nor Edward could add to the agonies of Clara's remorse, by unavailing reproaches, but they both keenly felt how much it added to their calamity, to think the means their guardian angel held out for their relief, was wrested from them by the hands of a daughter and a sister.

"We must submit," said Mrs. Stanley, with a heavy sigh, "to the will of God."

"We must *act*," said Edward, "and be not cast down, my mother. If Heaven spares my life and health, we shall never know one real want. In this country there is no such thing as *poverty*, and as to vanity and show, let Clara's bitter lesson prove the emptiness of their claims."

When it was known that Mrs. Stanley's dwelling-house was advertised for sale, to satisfy the demands of impatient creditors, there was much astonishment and sorrow, for she was a woman universally beloved for her meekness, loving kindness, and tender charities. The neighbours gathered in to question and condole, and great was the sympathy expressed for Clara's inconsolable grief. They did not know the secret burden that weighed her to the dust, and wondered much to see the young bowed down so heavily, while Mrs. Stanley seemed so calm and resigned. Fanny Morton was very sorry, and expressed herself on the occasion with all the depth of feeling of which her tranquil nature was capable,

but Edward more than ever felt the immeasurable distance of their souls. Hers could not comprehend the depth and sensibility of his. The lightning of heaven, and the cold phosphorescent light of earth are not more different in their properties. Mrs. Clifton came, but not with the crowd. She waited till others accused her of standing aloof from her favourites in the day of adversity. She came alone, leaving her carriage, her servants, and all the paraphernalia of her wealth behind her. Mrs. Stanley knew how to appreciate this delicacy, as well as the added deference and respect of her manners. She asked no questions—she added no condolence—she came, she said, to solicit a favour, not to confer one. She wished to become purchaser of their beautiful cottage, whose situation she had so much admired. She had learned that her father had desired to become the owner of the lot, if Mr. Stanley ever disposed of it. She was anxious herself that it should not pass into other hands, and to secure their continuance in the neighbourhood.

"If by gratifying my father's known wish," continued Mrs. Clifton, her brilliant eyes softened by visible emotion, "I can relieve you, Mrs. Stanley, from, I trust, a transient embarrassment, I shall not consider myself less your debtor—when the time comes that you desire to reclaim it, I will not withhold its restoration."

The tears, which sorrow had not wrung from Mrs. Stanley's eyes, now fell fast from gratitude. She pressed Mrs. Clifton's hand in hers, and said, in a low

voice, "You have caused the widow's heart to sing for joy—may heaven reward you for your kindness."

Clara, incapable of restraining herself longer, threw her arms around her neck, and sobbed out, "Oh, madam, you have saved me from despair."

Mrs. Clifton, who attributed her words to the natural regret of a young and ardent heart, on the prospect of quitting the home of childhood, warmly returned the involuntary embrace, and bid her call back her smiles, and be ready to accompany her on the morrow in a botanical excursion. When she rose to depart, Edward rose also to accompany her home. He was no longer gloomy and reserved. He no longer looked upon her as an enchantress, moving high above him, in a region of inaccessible light and splendour, but as a woman, endowed with all the warm and lovely sensibilities of her sex—a being whom he might dare to love, though he could never hope to obtain—who might forgive the homage, even though she rejected the worshipper. Had not humility, always the accompaniment of deep and fervent passion, ruled his perceptions, he might have derived an inspiration for his hopes, from the softened language of her eyes—a language which others had not been slow in translating. They entered the magnificent saloon. The contrast its gilded walls presented to the agitated scene they had left, was felt by both.

"Desolate is the dwelling of Moina," said she, in an accent half sad and half sportive,—“silence is in the house of her fathers."

"Dwells there no joy in song, white hand of the harp of Lutha?" continued Edward, in the same poetic language, and drawing the harp towards her. It is always delightful to find the train of our own thoughts pursued by a friend—proving that we think in unison. Mrs. Clifton felt this as she swept her hands over the chords, and called forth that sweet and impassioned melody peculiar to the daughters of Italy. She paused, and her dark eye rested a moment on the face of her auditor. It was partly shaded by his hand, and she saw that he was overcome by some powerful emotion. Again she sang, but her voice was low, and she ceased at length as if weary of the effort.

"You seem spell-bound by the genius of silence," said she; "I should be wrong to break the charm."

"I know I must appear more than stupid," replied he, "when there is every thing around to inspire me. But my feelings have been deeply oppressed by anxiety, and the weight of anxiety has been removed by a debt of gratitude, which, however pleasing and gracefully imposed, is only too deeply felt."

"Oh! let not your pride be jealous of the happiness I have dared this day to purchase. What have I done for you and yours, half—half so precious to YOUR remembrance, as to *mine*? Your sister's tearful blessing, your mother's hallowed prayer."

She spoke with fervor and sensibility, and her countenance was lighted up with such an exalted expression, Edward was scarcely able to restrain the impetuous impulses of passion that urged him on. The confession trembled on his lips, but pride and

poverty, two stern monitors, stood by his side, and forbade the avowal of his madness and presumption.

"No!" said he to himself, "let me live on in the silence and secrecy of hopeless devotion, rather than by unguarded rashness risk the loss of that confidence so dangerous, yet so delightful. She allows me to be her friend. Let me never dare to aspire to more."

Thus reasoned Edward Stanley, and thus he schooled the language of his lips—but the passion denied utterance in words, flashed from his eyes, and modulated every accent of his voice. He looked back upon this evening, passed alone with Mrs. Clifton, amidst the breathings of poetry and music, and exulted in the reflection that he had not committed himself by any act of imprudence he might hereafter vainly rue. Sometimes his feelings rose up against Clara, for the selfish vanity that had led her to sacrifice the fortune that might have placed him above the suspicion of mercenary motives, but her unappeasable sorrow for her transgression, would not allow him to cherish any resentment towards her. Sometimes too, his conscience reproached him for the part he was acting towards Fanny, the idol of his boyish fancy—but every hour passed in her presence, convinced him that she looked upon him more as a brother than a lover, and wrapped in a mantle of constitutional indifference, she seemed scarcely aware of the wandering of his heart.

"Oh! I am so glad you are not going to leave us!

I do not know how I should live without you and Clara."

Fanny's most ardent expression in joy and sorrow, was, "I am so glad—I am so sorry." It was a great deal for her to say—but she looked at Clara exactly as she did at him, and Edward, whose heart was now enlightened, felt that she did not love him, and he rejoiced in the conviction.

One evening, just between twilight and darker hour, he was returning from a long walk, when, a little before he left the woodland path that led into the public road, he met an old woman muffled in a cloak and hood—he bowed, and was passing on, when she accosted him in a voice that was not unknown, and approaching nearer to her, he knew by the spectacles gleaming through the shades, under the deeper shade of a mob-cap, his ancient friend of the stage-coach, and he greeted her with great cordiality. She told him she was travelling about as usual, and had stopped in the village to make a visit to Mrs. Clifton, the granddaughter of her old friend.

"It is growing dark and late," said he, "let me see you safe to her house, for you have mistaken the path that leads to it."

"Stop a moment," cried she, "if you are not in too much haste, and let me rest on this log by the wayside. I am old, and it wearies me to walk fast. Sit down, young man, and let me ask after your welfare. I have not forgotten your kindness to the aged, nor ever shall I."

Edward brushed the dust from the log with his

handkerchief, and preparing a seat for her, with great reverence placed himself at her side.

"Come," said she, "I must soon be gone, but I want to know if I can serve you. I am an eccentric old creature, but I am well off in the world, and when I die, I cannot carry my money into the grave. I am told there is a pretty young girl in the neighbourhood, whom you love, and would marry, were you not poor. Do not blush to own it, for if it is so, and I can make you happy by my means, I shall bless the hour that brought us together, even near the end of my pilgrimage."

Her tremulous voice faltered, and she raised her handkerchief under her spectacles.

"Thank you, a thousand times, for your generous offer," replied Edward, much moved; "but indeed, madam, you are misinformed. I would not marry, if I could."

"Young man," cried she, "you are not sincere. The heart craves for a kindred heart. You would not live alone. Confide in me, and I will not betray you. Trifle with me, and you may lose a friend, whose professions are not lightly made. Tell me, do you not love the fair girl, whom they call the beauty of the village, or is it but a passing rumour that has reached my ears?"

Edward wondered at the interest this singular old woman expressed in his destiny, but he did not doubt its sincerity, and he would not repay it with dissimulation.

"No, madam, I do not love her, otherwise than

with brotherly kindness. Where I *do* love, I cannot hope, and all your generosity cannot avail me there."

"Where?" said she. "I want no half confidences. The imagination of age is dull to that of youth. Tell me all, or nothing."

"There is one, then, with whom, were she poor, beggary would be a paradise, but whom fortune has placed so far beyond my reach, it would be madness to name, and presumption to aspire to. Sometimes, emboldened by her condescension, I have dared to think, had my lot been different—but no—it can never be—I need not say more—you know where your steps are bound."

A silence followed this avowal, and Edward was so much absorbed by his own feelings, as almost to forget the presence of his companion. At length she spoke.

"I do not see the great presumption of your hopes if you mean the Widow Clifton. I see nothing to make her beyond your reach, unless you choose yourself to put her up in the clouds. She is rich, it is true, but what does she want in another? She has found no joy in wealth. I know the history of her marriage; it was involuntary on her part, and brought no happiness—a state of splendid bondage. Why do you not at least learn from her, whether your love is hopeless? If I, an old woman—if my heart warmed towards you, the first moment I saw you,—is her young bosom made of stone, that it cannot be melted or impressed?"

"She has often spoken," said Edward, finding an increasing fascination in the subject, and drawing still nearer his aged friend, "of the loneliness of her destiny, and of the insufficiency of wealth, to satisfy the cravings of the heart. Then wild dreams dazzled my imagination, and gilt the future with the hues of heaven. But the dread of being banished from her presence, of incurring the displeasure of one who had been the benefactress of our family—you, who are now in the winter of your days, can have no conception of the strength of these mental conflicts—this warring of fire and ice."

"I have not forgotten the memories of youth," she answered; "and impassive as you believe me, there is an image cherished in my breast, whose traits the waves of oblivion can never efface, nor the snow of age ever chill. Few can love as I have loved; and love with me, is immortal as the divine spark that lights up this perishing frame."

She leaned tremblingly against the shoulder of Edward, who reproached himself for calling up emotions so sublime in their strength, thus glowing and triumphant, amidst the ruins of beauty and youth. He drew her cloak more closely around her, and warned her that the night dew was falling.

"You are right," said she, rising; "I was forgetting I am not young like you."

They walked slowly on, in the direction of Mrs. Clifton's house.

"May I not ask the name of the friend, to whose kindness I am so much indebted?" cried he.

"Oh," replied she, laughing, "I thought every body knew Aunt Bridget; for I am one of those universal aunts, whom every body knows, and nobody cares for. My property is my own, and I have a right to bequeath it to whomsoever I please. I have chosen you as my heir, and you may consider yourself equal in fortune to Widow Clifton, or any other widow in the land. Not a word of thanks—no gratitude—at least till legal measures are taken to secure it to your possession."

"Singular and generous being!" said Edward; beginning to believe her brain was somewhat unsound, "what have I done to excite so romantic an interest, what can I do to prove myself worthy of it?"

"Be sincere—truth is the only bond of love, and concealment with friends is falsehood."

They had now reached the gate of the avenue.

"You will go in?"

"No," said he, "I cannot see her to-night; to-morrow, perhaps—shall I see you then?"

"I cannot tell what the morrow will bring forth. But one thing let me say, young man, ere we part. You must plead your own cause, and not expect it will be done by me. If you have not moral courage and manly spirit sufficient to meet the consequences, whatever they may be, you merit the downfall of your hope, and the humiliation of your pride."

She closed the gate, and Edward watched her dark shrouded figure slowly treading the winding path, and almost imagined he had been with one of those sibylline priestesses, who opened their lips in pro-



phcey, and shadowed the mystic outlines of futurity. "Whatever she may be," thought he, "I will be guided by her counsel, and abide by the result."

As he drew near his own home, and saw the light shining so quietly and brightly through the trees that quivered gently as in a golden shower, and thought how tranquilly the hearts of the inmates now beat, secure from the fear of being driven from that love-hallowed home—when he reflected that for this peace, so beautifully imagined in the scene before him, they were indebted to the very being whose recollection excited the throbbing of a thousand pulses in his heart and in his brain,—gratitude so mingled with and chastened his love, that every breathing became a prayer for her happiness, even if it were to be purchased at the sacrifice of his own.

He saw Clara through the window, seated at a table, with some object before her, which was shaded by the branches, but her attitude was so expressive that he stood a moment to contemplate her figure. Her hands were clasped in a kind of ecstasy, and her cheeks were coloured with a bright crimson, strikingly contrasting with their late pallid hue. Something hung glittering from her fingers, upon which she gazed rapturously one moment,—then, bending forward the next, she seemed intent upon what was before her. He opened the door softly; she sprang up, and, throwing her arms around him, cried in an accent of hysterical joy—

"Dear brother—the trunk is found—there it is,

oh! I am so hoppy!" And she wept and laughed alternately.

There indeed it was—the identical trunk—whose loss had occasioned so much sorrow,—with its red morocco covering and bright nails untarnished. Edward rejoiced more for Clara's sake than his own—for her remorse, though salutary to herself, was harrowing to him.

"Explain this mystery, dear Clara, and moderate these transports. How have you recovered the lost treasure?"

"Oh! it was the strangest circumstance! Who do you think had it, but Mrs. Clifton, that angel sent down from heaven, for our especial blessing."

"You know I went there to-day, about the time you took the walk in the woods. My heart was so full of grief for my folly, and gratitude for her kindness, I thought it would have burst, and I told her all; no, not quite all—for I could not bring myself to tell her that it contained your property; her eye seemed to upbraid me so for betraying the trust; but again it beamed with joy because she could restore to me both sacred relics."

Here she held up the beads, now a thousand times more precious to her than all the chains in the world.

"The pedler called there, after he left me. She recognized the trunk, as it bore the name of a friend."

Edward's cheek burned with emotion—for his own name, Edward Stanley, was wrought upon the velvet lining, but Clara went breathlessly on.



"She gathered from the pedler the history of the beads, and purchased them both, that she might, on some future day, have the pleasure of restoring them. She understood the sacrifice my foolish vanity had made, and anticipated the repentance that would follow. Is she not a friend, the best and kindest, and ought we not to love her as our own souls? And can you forgive me, Edward—will you forgive me, though I fear I never shall be able to pardon myself?"

"Forgive you, my sister? Let me only see once more the sweet, unaffected girl, who was the object of my approbation, as well as my love, and I ask no more."

He now examined the secret recess of the trunk, and found the papers safe and untouched. Their value transcended his most sanguine expectations. He could redeem the paternal dwelling, meet the demands which had involved them in distress, and still find himself a comparatively rich man.

Clara ran out of the room, and, bringing back the chain—the "cause of all her woe,"—she put it in a conspicuous corner of her work-box.

"I will never wear this paltry bauble again," cried she; "but I will keep it as a memento of my vanity, and a pledge of my reformation. I will look at it a few moments every day, as the lady did upon the skeleton of her lover, to remind me of the sins of mortality."

When Clara had left them with a joyous "good night," Mrs. Stanley drew her chair next to her son, and looked earnestly in his face.

"There is something I ought to mention," said she, "and yet I cannot bear to damp your present satisfaction. I have been told of an intended marriage, which I fear will disappoint your fondest hopes. I trust, however, you have too much honest pride to suffer your feelings to prey upon your happiness."

Edward started up, and pushed his chair against the wall with a violent rebound.

"I cannot bear it, mother—I believe it would drive me mad after all I have dared to dream to-night. I might, perhaps, live without her, but I could not live to see her married to another. Fool, credulous fool that I was, to believe that dotard's prophecy!"

He sat down again in the chair which Clara had left, and, throwing his arms across the table, bent his face over them, and remained silent.

"Alas! my son," cried Mrs. Stanley, "I feared it would be so. Mr. Morton feels for you the tenderness of a father, but——"

"Mr. Morton, did you say?" cried Edward, starting up again, at the risk of upsetting chairs, tables, and lamps,— "I believe I am out of my senses; and is it Fanny Morton who is going to be married?"

The sudden change in his countenance, from despair to composure, quite electrified Mrs. Stanley. She could not comprehend such great and sudden self-control.

"Mr. Morton tells me," she continued, "that Fanny is addressed by a gentleman of wealth and respectability, and one who is every way a desirable connection. He has learned from Fanny that no engage-

ment subsisted between you; but he seemed apprehensive that your affections were deeply interested, and wished me to soften the intelligence as much as possible."

Edward smiled. "Tell Mr. Morton I thank him for his kind consideration, for no one can rejoice in Fanny's prospects more than I do."

Mrs. Stanley was bewildered, for she had not dreamed of his present infatuation.

"I cannot understand how resignation can be acquired so soon, especially after such a burst of frenzy. I fear it is merely assumed to spare my feelings."

"I cannot feign, dear mother, though I may conceal. Dismiss all fears upon this subject, for were Fanny to live a thousand years in all her virgin loveliness—if nature permitted such a reign to youth and beauty—she would never be sought after as the bride of your son."

He kissed his mother, and bade her a hasty "good night," anxious to avoid explanation on a subject which had already agitated him so much.

The next day, when he reflected on his extraordinary interview with the old lady of the stage-coach, and her incredible promise in his behalf, he became more than ever convinced of her mental hallucination. Yet there was too much method in her madness, if madness indeed existed, to allow him to slight the impressions of her words.—He was now independent, and hopes that before seemed presumptuous, now warmed every pulsation of his being.

"Shall I even now follow the sibyl's counsel?" said he to himself, as he bent his steps at evening towards Mrs. Clifton's door; but the moment he entered her presence, Aunt Bridget, her promises, and the world itself were forgotten. She met him with a smile, but there was a burning glow on her cheek, and a hurried glance of her eye, that indicated internal agitation. She attempted to converse on indifferent topics, but her thoughts seemed to wander, and she at length became silent.

"I saw a friend of yours last night," said he with much embarrassment, for he knew not whether his confessions were unrevealed. "She is very singular, but extremely interesting in her eccentricities. Is she with you yet?"

"She is, and will be with us whenever you desire. Yet I would first speak with you, Mr. Stanley, and communicate an intelligence which I trust will not cost me the withdrawal of your friendship. You have known me rich, surrounded with all the appliance of wealth and fashion, and, as such, envied and admired. My fortune has been transferred into the hands of another, and you see me now destitute of that tinsel glare, which threw a radiance around me, which was not my own. Flatterers may desert me, but friends—I trust I may retain."

She extended her hand with an involuntary motion, and the glow forsook her cheek.

"Your fortune gone," exclaimed Edward, "and mine restored!" The next moment he was kneeling at her feet. In no other attitude could he have ex-

pressed the depth of passion he now dared to utter. What he said he knew not; he only felt that he was breathing forth the hoarded and late hopeless love, of whose extent he had never before been fully conscious.

"Am I then loved for myself alone?" cried Mrs. Clifton; "by one, too, from whom I have vainly waited this avowal, to justify my preference?"

She bowed her head upon the hands that Edward was clasping in his own, as if her soul shared the humility of his devotion. Who would have recognized the gay and brilliant heiress, who once revelled in the cold halls of fashion, in this tender and passionate woman?

"Oh!" exclaimed she, when the feelings of both became sufficiently calm for explanation, "were I still the child of affluence, I might have vainly looked for the testimony of that love which the vassal of love was so long a rebel to, to truth, and to nature. And now," added she, rising, "let me not, in the fulness of my heart's content, forget your old friend, who is waiting no doubt, with impatience, to greet you. You will probably be surprised to learn that she is the lawful inheritor of my fortune, and that all I have been so profusely lavishing was her just due."

She smiled at Edward's unutterable look of astonishment, and closed the door. He was left but a few moments to his own bewildered thoughts, when the door again opened, and Aunt Bridget entered, in the same ancient cloak and hood, which seemed to be a part of herself.

"Wisest and best of counsellors," said he, advancing to meet her, and leading her to a seat on the sofa—"to you I owe the blessings of this hour. It was surely a propitious star that shone upon me when I first seated myself beside you that memorable night. Had you not come to prove your claim to her wealth, the spell that bound me would not yet have been broken, and a wall of separation might still have arisen between hearts that have met and blended, and will continue to mingle through eternity."

Aunt Bridget turned away her head, and seemed suddenly to have lost the gift of speech.

Somewhat alarmed at her unusual silence, especially as he felt her shaking and trembling under the folds of her cloak, he leaned over, and tried to untie her hood, so as to give her air. Fearing she would fall into a fit, as she continued to tremble still more violently, he burst the ribbons asunder; for the knots seemed to tighten under his fingers, and the cloak, hood, and mob cap fell off simultaneously; the large green spectacles, too, dropped from the eyes, which, laughing and brilliant, now flashed upon his own—and the arms which had been extended to support a far different personage, were folded in transport around the graceful form of Mrs. Clifton.

"Will you forgive me?" cried she, when she raised those beaming eyes from his shoulder, "the wily deception I have practised? Will you forgive me for continuing a disguise through love which commenced from eccentric motives? Young and unprotected, I have sometimes found safety in this disfiguring garb.

Like the Arabian monarch, I like, occasionally, the covering of a mask, that I may be able to read the deep mysteries of human nature. But my masquerade is over. I have now read all I ever wished to learn. Promise not to love me less because the doom of riches still clings to me, and I will pledge life and fame, that you shall find in Aunt Bridget a faithful, true, and loving wife."

### The Pedler. The Sequel to the Mob Cap.

CLARA STANLEY, at the time of her brother's marriage with Mrs. Clifton, believed herself the happiest of human beings. The first wish of her heart was gratified, and she did not think it possible that a more ardent one could quicken its pulsations. She loved Edward as a most affectionate and tender brother; she admired him, too, as the most handsome and graceful of men, and her pride as well as her affection exulted in his union with the admired and fascinating widow. But after the excitement attending the event had subsided, she wondered at the dejection that weighed down her spirits. She felt that there was a love dearer than that of a sister's now gladdening his life, and that she must henceforth be satisfied with a secondary place in his affections. She had no other brother, no sister to supply his place as a companion, and poor Clara was often left to feel a dearth of which

she had never dreamed before. There was something, too, in the impassioned character of Gertrude (for thus by her Christian name we will hereafter designate our former friend of the Mob Cap) that threw a kind of romance over every scene in which she moved, and Clara, communing with her own heart, would sometimes ask herself if she had the same deep capabilities of loving, or if the being existed, though yet unseen, who could call them into existence.

An event soon occurred that gave a new colour to her dreams. She was sitting at an open window, intently reading, when the unfolding of the gate attracted her attention. She started as if she had seen a monster, for she knew at the first glance that it was a pedler who was coming in, and the sight of one filled her with horror. To make the sudden appearance more terrific, he carried in his hand a red morocco trunk, almost exactly like the one she had so shamefully bartered, and unexpectedly recovered.

"Oh, mother, dear mother!" exclaimed she, starting up in dismay, "do not let him come in; I cannot bear the sight of him. Tell him we do not want any jewels. I hate—I detest the whole tribe of pedlers. I wish——"

A look from her mother checked her rash speech.

"Rather blame yourself, Clara," said Mrs. Stanley, "for a folly for which I never would again upbraid you, if the remembrance of it did not make you unreasonable and unjust to others. I do not wish you to purchase jewels, but you must not be harsh in your refusal."

"I know I am wrong," answered Clara, ingenuously; "but you know not the agonies of remorse the sight of that man calls to my recollection."

In the mean while the pedler knocked, and was admitted by Mrs. Stanley, with her usual gentle courtesy. He was a young man of quite a genteel appearance, and his long dark hair shading his forehead with its shining masses, his exceedingly dark complexion, and dark piercing eyes, reminded Clara, whose imagination was ever on the wing in search of romantic resemblances of the Gipsy race. He placed his trunk on the floor, and kneeling on one knee, opened it without speaking.

"Do not trouble yourself," said Clara, with a nervous shudder, as the opening lid displayed the glitter of the jewels; we do not wish to purchase any thing."

"Allow me to show them to you," said he, with that officious politeness peculiar to his profession, "you may be tempted to change your resolution."

"No, no," answered Clara; "I have made a vow never to wear another jewel."

"Not even a ring?" said he, with a smile, which she thought very bold and sarcastic; and determined to repel his assurance, she took up the book which she was reading, appeared to be absorbed by its contents.

But the persevering pedler was not so easily repulsed.

"Will you not look at this beautiful chain?" said he, holding one up so near her eyes that she could not but perceive the dazzle of the links.

"Surely," thought Clara, "he must be my evil genius,

sent to torment me before my time, for my past offence."

She put the chain back with an impatient gesture, and an appealing look to her mother to rid her of his importunity.

"My daughter has not the wish, nor I the means, to purchase your ornaments," said Mrs. Stanley mildly, but gravely; "you will probably find others in the neighbourhood, who have both."

The young pedler reluctantly closed his trunk and took up his hat, which he had thrown at Clara's feet as he knelt, and thus given the opportunity of seeing the name of Rover written on the lining. He observed the direction of her eyes, and said as he swung the hat carelessly in his hand,

"A very appropriate name, Miss, for one of my profession. I believe it was what made me first think of becoming a pedler; and, as I am naturally indolent and fond of variety, I find my roving life vastly agreeable at times."

"You are certainly vastly impertinent," thought Clara, as he retreated with a really graceful bow and a bold gaze of admiration, which displeased Mrs. Stanley very much, and made her close the door quickly after him, though it was a warm summer day.

"I do not like that man at all, Clara," said she, after he was gone; "he is very assuming, and though I reproved you for your vehemence when he first made his appearance, I cannot but agree with you in thinking that pedlers are any thing but a respectable class of people. A young, handsome, and appa-

rently intelligent man, like him, to be wasting his time in such an idle, inglorious profession. You were right in checking his presumption as you did."

The next day Clara was searching her work-basket for some stray articles of sewing, when her eyes fell on a small packet, folded up in muslin paper.

"I do not remember what I have folded so carefully in this envelope," said she, as she loosened the covering, and a beautiful diamond ring, set in pearl, dropped into her lap. Clara was lost in astonishment, and examined it again and again, almost believing it an optical illusion. "How could it get here?" asked she aloud; but she was alone, and all the answer she could obtain was from her own thoughts. "The pedler? Yes, it must have been the pedler!" She remembered that he had taken out some of his jewels, and placed them on the table, and that when he put them back, she had heard some paper rustling in his hands. This could not have been the result of accident,—it must have been a bold design,—and Clara blushed as if she had been detected in the act of stealing; recalling his long, lingering gaze of admiration, and the bright, dark eyes which, in spite of herself, had riveted that gaze on her memory.

She could not return the ring—she could not keep it; what should she do? She put it on her finger, turned it in the sunbeams, and admired its shifting lustre, and delicate setting. That it was intended as a token of the admiration his looks so evidently expressed, she could not doubt; and, though she knew she ought to be indignant at the presumption of

the act, a throb of gratified vanity fluttered in her heart.

The sound of approaching footsteps induced her to restore the ring to the envelope, and when her mother entered, she was busily searching her work-box for her thimble and scissors, and looking in every direction to avoid the glance that might notice the confusion of her own. Shame prevented her from mentioning the circumstance to her mother,—besides, she did not wish to expose the young pedler to her resentment for his secret homage.

"I wonder what I have done with my ring!" said she, stooping down that her heightened colour might seem the result of the attitude.

"Your ring!" repeated Mrs. Stanley—"what ring?"

"Oh! I did not mean ring," cried Clara hastily; "I meant my thimble. But it is too warm to be confined to the needle within doors. I scarcely ever think of walking now,—Edward is not with me."

"It is true, dear Clara," answered Mrs. Stanley, "you must feel the want of exercise. But you should not linger at home, for want of your brother; for you must learn to be more independent of him now. The paths are all familiar to you, and in our quiet village you can never be in danger."

Clara felt as if she could bless her mother, for thus giving her a *carte-blanche* to ramble about by herself, and just now she wanted to think her own thoughts, and her own thoughts were never half so delightful as when she could look up to the blue sky, stretching far around her, and the green earth beneath her, the lull-

ing sound of waters in her ear, and the fragrant breathings of the zephyrs on her brow.

"I will first go to Gertrude," said she to herself, "and, if I find her alone, I will tell her about the ring, and ask her what I must do."

Gertrude met her at the entrance of the avenue, with one of her most brilliant smiles.

"You are the very person I most wished to see," said she. "I have just received a letter from that chivalric cousin of mine, Washington Graham, of whom you have more than once heard me speak. He is actually wending his way hither, so much charmed is he by the description I have given him of a certain rural maiden, whom, perchance, you know. Hear what he says himself, Clara."

Clara blushed, while Gertrude opened the letter, and read here and there a paragraph:—

"A cheek to blush, an eye to weep, a heart to feel, and a mind to kindle—these are charms that exercise an almost omnipotent sway over my wayward spirit. \* \* Simplicity and sensibility constitute what is most lovely in woman. When these are combined, as they seem to be in this charming new sister of yours, I feel as if I could make a pilgrimage to her shrine, and glory in surrendering a liberty of which so many have vainly attempted to deprive me."

"Oh, how could you be so unjust to yourself and me?" exclaimed Clara, ready to cry with unaffected vexation. "You know I am the veriest rustic in the world. Even in Edward's company I fear to disgrace him, and how must I appear in a stranger's eyes?"

I would not meet him for the universe after such a——"

Clara hesitated. She did not like to accuse Gertrude of falsehood, especially when too partial kindness had dictated the act. Gertrude passed her hand over Clara's throbbing neck, and looked smilingly into her downcast eyes.

"The sister of Edward Stanley need not blush in the presence of any gentleman of the land,—never at least for her own sake—and do not destroy the fair web of romance I am weaving for you, by false pride or false shame. This cousin of mine is doomed to be the hero of your destiny, graced as he is with every quality to win and wear a maiden's heart. Since I have robbed you of a brother, dear Clara, it is no more than fair that I should give you a lover in return."

In vain Clara protested and declared she never thought of a lover, never wished for one, and entreated her never to mention the subject; she could never more hear the name of Washington Graham, without feeling her cheeks dyed with conscious blushes.

"I dare not speak of the ring," thought she, "to Gertrude now. If she has such magnificent views for me, she will be doubtless displeased at the presumption of the gift."

With her thoughts strangely confused between the blending images of Washington Graham and the pedler, she turned towards the woodland, and continued her walk alone. There was one favourite spot where the turf seemed greener, the sky bluer, and the trees bent their branches more lovingly towards those



who sought the shadow of their leaves than any other, and thither Clara directed her steps. She had concealed the ring in her bosom, resolving to inquire at the earliest opportunity, the route the pedler had taken; but the opportunity was much nearer than she imagined, for when she reached her favourite resting-place, there the identical young gentleman was reclining, leaning on his red morocco trunk, his hat lying on the grass, and a poetical-looking book in his hand.

Clara started back in alarm and shame, at thus suddenly finding herself alone with one whose presumption the restraining presence of her mother had failed to check. The young man sprang upon his feet, but his manner, instead of being bold and careless, was modest and respectful.

"Pardon me," said he, "if I have intruded upon a spot, which, perhaps, is by right appropriated to yourself. If so, forgive the sympathy which drew me hither."

Clara's alarm subsided at the deference of his address, but her embarrassment remained.

"I have no right here, sir," replied she, "beyond your own. But since I meet you so unexpectedly, I would wish——" Here Clara stammered; for in restoring the ring, she knew not how to avoid wounding his feelings, without compromising her own dignity. She drew forth the paper, which she had concealed in the foldings of her dress, and handing it toward him, with a look which she intended to be cold and severe, added, "this ring which I found on my table, I be-

lieve must be your property. I was wishing for an opportunity to return it, as it appears to be of value."

"Do you then scorn my offering?" said he, drawing back with an air of deep mortification; "was I too presumptuous, in daring to leave this little token of the admiration with which you had inspired me? I know my situation is lowly, and those who look upon wealth and station as what constitute the man, may regard me with contempt; but there is something in your countenance that encouraged me to think you were above the false prejudices of the world. No! madam, I cannot take back the gift, worthless henceforth, if refused by you. It shall never encircle another's finger; but lie in the grass beneath our feet, to mingle its pearls with the dews of night."

Poor Clara! assailed by flattery, breathed in poetical high-flown language such as she had read in books, but never expected to hear addressed to herself—delighted, in the midst of her confusion, at meeting with so romantic an incident in her hitherto uneventful life—she could not repulse with harshness her humble admirer.

"It is not from scorn that I refused your gift," answered she; "but you must be conscious of the extreme impropriety of my permitting such freedom in a stranger. Your conduct is very strange, sir—very unauthorized."

"Is it strange," said Rover, without seeming disconcerted by her rebuke, "to admire what is beautiful, or unauthorized to wish it our own?—In my somewhat idle and wandering life, I have had leisure

to cultivate the taste and imagination nature has given me, and I think I can say, mine is no vulgar stamp. Books are my constant companions, poetry my passion, and nature my study and delight. I am sure I speak what is true, and your own heart can bear witness to it—there is something congenial to your own character in mine. Two kindred souls can read each other at a glance, while discordant spirits may remain strangers for years.”

He accompanied these words by a glance such as Clara never met before, and it made her heart throb, and her cheek kindle. There was a glow, too, mantling his own dark cheek, an eloquent commentary on the warmth of his language. She cast down her eyes, and they rested on the hateful trunk—the badge of the pedler—and her mind all at once took in the ridiculous position in which she was placed. A pedler for her lover! A stranger whom she had never seen but once before; and then her mother, gentle as she was, had shut the door in his face, incensed at his familiarity. Then the vision of the proud Washington Graham, such as Gertrude had depicted, came in dazzling contrast, to increase her mortification. These thoughts, so chilling to romance, gave her sufficient composure to speak, and resolution enough to speak as she ought.

“I cannot forgive myself for continuing this conversation so long. I feel more and more sensible of its impropriety. Since you leave me no other alternative, you force me to lay your treasure where the dews of night will indeed deface its lustre.”

She said this in answer to a deprecating motion of his hand, as she again extended the ring, and dropping it on the grass, she turned to depart, glorying in the conquest she had made over the weakness and vanity which tempted her to linger and accept an incense as novel as it was pleasing. Rover crushed the ring under his feet, and his eye flashed scornfully.

“I see I am mistaken. Every woman is a slave to opinion, and fears to follow the dictates of her own heart. A fine coat and a fine equipage are the only passports to her favour, and provided the world approve her choice, it matters not whether she is tortured by unkindness, or frozen by indifference.”

Clara stopped, for her spirits were roused, and she forgot her timidity, that she might vindicate herself from such an assertion.

“Whatever claims you may offer as an individual,” said she, “to confidence and respect, you must be conscious you have chosen a profession that precludes you, by its itinerant habits, from the society in which we mingle. I am indeed astonished that you are willing to pursue it, ignoble as it is deemed.”

“If I should tell you the history of my life,” he answered, more calmly, “you would find, perhaps, that I had been a rebellious youth, too proud to labour, too independent to solicit favour, who wanted to see a little of the world, and thought it just as honest and respectable to walk through it with a pedler’s trunk and a clear conscience as to wear a lawyer’s gown or carry a doctor’s lance. But,” added he, dismissing his sarcastic tone for one of deep feel-

ing, "if you dislike me because the world dubs me *pedler*, I will be any thing and every thing you please, if I may be animated with the hope of one day winning your affections. Yet the love that is capable of defying any reproach, and encountering any obstacle, that can trample pride and vanity, and the world itself, under its feet, is the only love that can satisfy the boundless wishes of my heart. If I cannot meet with this, I will continue a wanderer through life, dealing in tinsel and gewgaws, rejoicing the while in my own independence."

It was impossible for the imaginative and inexperienced Clara, to listen to these high-wrought sentiments, so exactly corresponding to her own, without being moved. She could not disdain one who laughed to scorn the distinctions of society, and who, proud of his inborn wealth, asserted his claims to regard as one of nature's aristocrats. In vain she sought to leave him, till she had admitted the possibility that he might see her again, and had promised that the dread of meeting him should not banish her entirely from her wonted walks.

When alone once more, she wept at her imprudence, and would have given worlds to live over again the last hour, that she might recall the faint encouragement she had given. She knew she was wrong in concealing the circumstance from her mother and brother; but she tried to persuade herself that he would soon leave the neighbourhood, and forget his foolish admiration of herself, so there could be no necessity of revealing what would only expose him to

their resentment. She avoided, after this, the place where she had met him; but there were other shaded walks, and her mother told her that her health would suffer for want of exercise. It would be impossible to live within doors all the time in warm summer weather, and it is not strange that she again encountered the persevering *pedler*, or that the dread and the shame that at first oppressed her, gradually melted away in the fascination of their romantic and untold meetings. Each time she said to herself—"It shall be the last;" but faint and wavering are the resolutions of youth, opposed to the growing influence of the strongest passion of the heart. He no longer carried the odious red trunk, and she tried to forget that she had ever seen it. When with him, it was an easy task, listening to such language, and looked upon by such eyes, soft, yet bright, so luminously dark! Even the gipsy hue of his complexion, gave him a wild charm in her eyes, harmonizing, as it did, with his wandering habits and eccentric character.

As Clara was walking, lost in these dangerous reveries, hesitating whether she should proceed where she was almost sure of meeting one who seemed like an invisible being to watch her footsteps, and know whither they were bound, or to remain nearer the guardian boundary of home, she was startled by the sound of horses' feet behind her, and it forcibly reminded her of her brother's first meeting with Mrs. Clifton, for it was precisely the same path, and likewise near the sunset hour of day. She turned her head involuntarily, as the sound came near, and drew

back as far as the width of the path would allow, to permit the stranger and his attendant to pass by. She did this with a quickened pulse, for something told her it must be Washington Graham. At any rate, he was no vulgar rider—for he was mounted on a coal-black horse, splendidly caparisoned, and attended by a negro, who rode one of the same raven colour, whose blackness was contrasted by a scarlet saddle-cloth, that almost swept the ground. Clara was so dazzled by the magnificence of their appearance, and so confused by the thought, that it was the hero appropriated to herself, by the splendid imagination of Gertrude, she could not clearly discern the gentleman's features, though he raised his hat as he passed, with a graceful bow, and slackened his pace, till he disappeared in the direction of the white house on the hill.

"What a singular coincidence!" said Clara to herself. "Just on this spot did Edward first behold Mrs. Clifton, on horseback, too, and that glance decided his destiny!" The ardent glance of Rover flashed through her memory, and, conscious of the struggle of vanity and feeling in the heart, she believed herself unworthy of the homage it expressed.

"What can he ever be to me, this proud, southern stranger," she added, "who comes among us like an eastern nabob?—and yet I shall be to him an object of ridicule and disgust, after Gertrude's glowing description. Had he never heard my name, I might escape his notice, but now it is impossible."

While her mind was wrought up to a state of

feverish excitement by the anticipated meeting with the dreaded stranger, her eyes were fixed on the windows of her brother's dwelling, illuminated as they now were, by the setting sunbeams, and she could see the dark outlines of the two riders defined upon them; then she knew that her conjecture was right. Most willingly would she have sought some covert in the woods, and fed on berries and herbs for weeks to come, to avoid the mortification she believed was in store for her;—but she fortunately remembered she had a mother, who was probably even now waiting her return with anxiety, for the soft gray of twilight was beginning to steal over sunset's golden tints.

The next day she received a summons from Gertrude, telling her there was to be a general gathering of friends to welcome the arrival of her cousin, who was all impatience to behold the fair rustic whose image was already drawn on his fancy in such attractive colours. This message renewed the trepidation of Clara to such a degree, that she was tempted to plead a nervous headache, as an excuse from attendance. One moment she was ready to sink at the thought of her being contemned and despised—the next the *possibility* that Washington Graham, lordly as he seemed, might cast a favouring glance upon her, unpretending as she was, filled her with dread. If so, what would become of poor Rover? And what would Gertrude think if she turned coldly away from the attentions of her gifted cousin? When arraying herself for the occasion, she tried to school herself into perfect indifference with regard to her appear-

ance; but in vain. She repeated to herself a hundred times, it was no matter how she looked. She could not obtain the stranger's admiration, if she would—she would not, if she could—still she lingered before her mirror, thinking it had never reflected a less pleasing image.—She was entirely divested of ornaments, for she had not forgotten the bitter lesson taught by the tinsel chain; but the “ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,” which seeks no praise or favour, for any outward gifts, Clara had not yet gained. The same vanity that led her to barter her self-approbation for a paltry bauble, now caused her to tremble, in anticipation of a stranger's scrutiny.—She thought it humility, and would have wept at the suggestion, that one trace of the foible that had lately cost her so dear was still lingering in her heart. The green branches were lopped off, but the roots still clung to the parent, and when circumstances favoured their growth, were ready to shoot forth with new luxuriance.

When Clara found herself in the illuminated drawing-room, she saw nothing, for a few moments, but bright spectres floating before her eyes, and heard nothing but a ringing sound in her ears—loud as the echoes of a tolling bell. She had a kind of consciousness that she was going through the ceremony of introduction to a gentleman; but how he looked and what he said, she knew not.—He might have been the veiled prophet Mohanna, for aught she knew of his face, for she never lifted her eyes from the carpet, but stood clinging to her brother's arm: her cheeks burn-

ing with blushes, indeed her whole face and even her neck was covered with the same crimson hue. Clara knew that the deep suffusion she was undergoing was any thing but becoming, and this conviction only added to the intensity of the glow. The idea that she was actually in the presence of the formidable Washington Graham, the prophesied hero of her destiny, was too overwhelming. He addressed her in the common language of courtesy, but she could only answer in monosyllables, and whispering to her brother to lead her to a window, he drew her away pitying her confusion, yet vexed at her unwonted awkwardness and taciturnity.

“Leave me here,” said she to Gertrude, who followed her to her retreat, “there are so many people in the centre of the room, that I cannot breathe. I will not disgrace you here.”

“I *will* leave you, dear Clara, since you desire it,” answered she, with a calm sweetness of manner that operated like a charm in soothing Clara's preposterous agitation, “and only remember that while you are just to yourself, you can never disgrace us. But for my sake, for Edward's sake, try to recover your self-possession, and give my kinsman the welcome I have dared to promise him from the sister of my husband.”

Clara felt the gentle rebuke conveyed in these words, as she followed with her eyes Gertrude's retreating figure, admiring that surpassing gracefulness which distinguished her above all other women. She could not but admire still more the kindness and forbear-

ance she manifested towards one so untutored and wayward as herself. The soft evening air that flowed in through the open window, cooled her fevered cheeks, while the circumstance of her being permitted to remain quiet much longer than she anticipated, composed, while it mortified her. She dreaded observation—she equally dreaded neglect; and when she saw Washington Graham conversing with some ladies on the opposite side of the room, without making any effort to disturb her solitude, and by their pleased and attentive countenances knew that he was saying what seemed very agreeable and entertaining, she felt

"It were better to stand the lightning's shock,  
Than moulder piecemeal on the rock."

She had but a partial view of his face, as it was somewhat turned from her, but his figure struck her as being remarkably graceful and gentleman-like. In a little while he changed his position, and her heart palpitated anew, for she thought he was approaching her; but no! he was drawing near his cousin, who, having been compelled to take her seat at the harp, (an instrument which still possessed all the charm of novelty with her guests,) was beckoning him to her side. Clara, like her brother, was passionately fond of music, and Gertrude's always thrilled to her very soul. But now a manly voice of exquisite melody mingled its deep notes with hers, and both blending with the full, breeze-like strains of the harp, "rose like a stream of rich distilled perfume." Edward was leaning over the instrument in the same attitude she

remembered to have seen him at Mrs. Clifton's never-to-be-forgotten party, but then his face was pale and his countenance dark; now it was lighted up with an expression of fervour and happiness as intense as the human features are capable of wearing, and Gertrude's eyes, floating in liquid radiance, were occasionally lifted to his, beaming with the love she no longer sought to bury in the foldings of her own heart.

"Surely," thought Clara, "I have never loved Edward, or my nature is too cold to love as she does, and yet my very existence seemed bound up in his. Can there be a love stronger than that which binds together an only brother and sister, when that brother, too, exercises a father's tender guardianship, in place of him who is laid low with the dead?"

As she asked herself this question, the image of Rover seemed to glide before her, and memory whispered, "The glance of Rover, when it bends on me, expresses the same depth and fire, and can it be that he loves me more than Edward? And will he ever fill, and more than fill a brother's place within my heart? Dare I ever avow the interest he has inspired, to those who have woven my destiny with that of this dazzling stranger?"

At this moment the face of Washington was turned towards her, and though her vision was somewhat obscured by the tears that involuntarily suffused her eyes, she could observe its lineaments, and she thought she could trace in every feature the pride of wealth and conscious superiority. His fine figure was set off by a dress of aristocratic elegance; his hair was

arranged in careless but graceful waves around his temples, revealing a forehead, whose unsunned whiteness plainly indicated that he at least was exempt from the primeval curse of earning his bread by the sweat of his brow. The southern sun had given to his cheeks a manlier glow, so that the idea of effeminacy could never be associated with Washington Graham, who looked exactly what he was, a gentleman by nature, by birth, by wealth, and by education. The music had so far subdued Clara, and carried her out of herself, that when Gertrude again approached her, accompanied by her cousin, she received them with less trepidation, and she ventured to listen and speak, though still with her eyes bowed down in "penetrative shame." Had Clara been conscious of her own attractions, she would not have suffered so much from self-distrust. She could not know them, for when she saw herself reflected in the looking-glass, in the act of dressing, her features were at rest, and there was nothing sufficiently striking in their outline, or dazzling in their hue, to give her an exalted image of her own loveliness. She never saw the roses flitting over her cheeks, coming and going, and coming again, heralds of the heart's spring-time, or the warm and shifting lustre of her eye, when enthusiasm or sensibility stirred its peaceful depths. What if she had made a conquest of a poor wandering pedler? This magnificent Washington Graham was a very different kind of person, and the idea that he would look upon her with admiration or love, was too absurd to be admitted, and it would certainly ex-

pose her to the ridicule of all her acquaintances, if it were but known that it had ever entered into her mind. But when she was once more alone in her room, and reflected on the events of the evening, though filled with mortification at her own want of self-control, she rejoiced she had stood the ordeal without any open violation of decorum, and without incurring any visible marks of contempt. The thought that she had been seen, and that the illusion created by Gertrude was consequently dispelled, was very comforting to her. Another thought gave her a feeling of delight and self-approbation—why, she could not define—Rover lost nothing in her estimation in comparison with the elegant southerner. She would rather live over again the moments passed with him in the midst of nature's loveliness, stolen and hurried as they were, and always accompanied with the dread of detection and the consciousness of acting a clandestine part, than spend a thousand such evenings as this—so cold, constrained and formal. Clara was a mystery to herself—foolish girl that she was, to find a happiness in contemplations which should fill her with sorrow and self-reproach! The next day, Gertrude came to her with a congratulating smile.

"I feared last night, dear Clara," said she, "when you acted the part of the blushing automaton, that my character as prophetess was more than endangered, that it was lost. But cousin Washington declares himself enchanted with that very bashfulness and simplicity that deprived you of your native grace. He is so sick of the artificial glare of fashionable



society, so weary of glitter and display, his eye reposes with delight, as he expresses it, on the soft green of your character."

"Stop," cried Clara, "you do but mock me. His practised tongue may well utter the language of flattery, but do not, dearest Gertrude, solicit his admiration for me. To gratify your affection he may profess an interest I know he can never feel. You know not how wounding is the thought that I should be forced, as it were, upon the particular notice of a gentleman like him!"

"Believe me, Clara," answered Gertrude, earnestly, "I will do nothing to wound your delicacy or pride. I will say nothing more at present, leaving it for time to unfold events, which I trust will justify all I have ventured to express; one thing only let me ask, what think you of my vaunted cousin?"

"I have no distinct impression left on my mind," answered Clara, "so deep was the embarrassment that oppressed me. He appeared to me like something bright, lofty, and cold."

"Oh," said Gertrude, "you do not know him yet. Beneath that somewhat cold exterior, the result of a premature experience of the world's heartlessness, there is a depth of feeling known only to those who see him free from the restraints of society. Handsome, intellectual and rich—romantic, too, in the best sense in which that oft perverted word is used, I should not think it possible that Washington Graham could fail to win a young and disengaged heart like yours."

The soft blush that had hitherto coloured the cheek of Clara, was pale to the crimson that now dyed its surface.

"He leaves us to-morrow for a few days," continued Gertrude, "and when he returns, I hope to see all my fondest wishes realized."

Clara breathed as if recovering from a fit of the nightmare. She pleaded every excuse to be permitted to remain at home that evening. She had a nervous headache, she was unfit to appear in company, she did not like to leave her mother alone; in short, she gave twenty reasons, any one of which was sufficient in itself to answer her purpose.

"My head really does ache," said Clara, after Gertrude's departure, "and I think a walk in the fresh air will revive me; though unfit for company, I am not ashamed of being seen by the cattle and the birds." How she disposed of her objections to leave her mother alone, remained a mystery even to herself. She had never met Rover in the path in which she now walked, and he could not know the direction she had taken; yet she started when the wind moved the branches or the birds flew rustling through the leaves, as if these accustomed sounds were the harbingers of coming footsteps. She was unwilling to acknowledge to herself the disappointment that weighed upon her spirits; but not finding in her walk the exhilarating influence she anticipated, she turned her face homeward.

"He has probably heard of the arrival of Washington Graham," thought Clara, "and believes me paying homage to his wealth and pretensions. He

does me injustice, but it is no matter. Better, far better that we should never meet again—for he can never be any thing to me. Edward would not disdain his poverty, for he was himself once poor. But a pedler! Mrs. Clifton would not have married Edward if he had been an itinerant pedler."

Just as Clara had finished these reflections, which breathed more of pique than she was aware of, she heard a sudden crashing among the boughs, and the pedler himself bounded into the path, his dark complexion glowing from the rapidity of his motions, and his eye sparkling with more than its wonted fire.

"I feared that I might be forgotten," said he; "but I see that I have wronged you—yet if village rumour has been true, it is a hopeless devotion, an act of still greater presumption. It says that a stranger of wealth and distinction, conspicuous for the display and pride of his appearance, is come hither for the sole purpose of addressing and wedding Clara Stanley. It says, too, that he will not address her in vain."

The characteristic openness and boldness of this address left Clara no room for evasion. She did not wish to acknowledge its truth—she would not give utterance to a falsehood. Unpractised in the arts which could teach her the way of extrication, she stood silent and embarrassed, wishing the good people of the village would find something else to talk about besides the Stanleys, whose concerns seemed to interest them so much.

"You are silent, Clara," cried he, in an altered

tone; "you do not deny it, and heaven forbid you should, if for once village gossip has spoken the truth. I have no right to reproach you—you have professed nothing—promised nothing—and yet I feel as if I were waking from the sweetest and brightest dream that ever gladdened the heart of man—the dream of imagined perfection."

Clara's heart swelled under the consciousness of injustice, and she would have made an indignant reply, but the deep dejection of his countenance and air inspired her with pity.

"If I deserved upbraiding from you," said she, "I should not at this moment be dreading the reproaches of all whom I love. Whatever may be said of this stranger's visit, his coming can never influence my feelings towards you."

The last words were uttered in a tremulous voice. She began to feel as if she had forsaken the "guide of her youth," and rashly given her happiness into a stranger's keeping. In the true spirit of a heroine, though true only to the impulse of nature, she covered her face with her hands, and, sitting down at the foot of the tree beneath which they were standing, tried to think herself miserable; but, strange as it may seem, a thrill of delight still penetrated her heart, from the conviction that she was beloved. Nothing was more natural, from the lowly position she had assumed, for Rover to kneel at her side; and he did kneel in exactly the same graceful attitude in which she first beheld him, when he bent to display his jewels to her admiring gaze; but Clara had forgotten all that,

and she soon forgot every thing else but the words he breathed into her ear, and the looks that bore witness to their sincerity.

The next morning, as she was tying up some wandering vines, that answered all the purposes of *jalousies*, to the window, she heard the tramping of horses' feet, and Washington Graham, on his raven black horse, accompanied by his black attendant, with the red saddle cloth sweeping so magnificently on either side, was seen passing by. He lifted his hat, and bowed till his hair almost touched his horse's flowing mane, then rode rapidly by. Clara thought of the Black Knight in *Ivanhoe*; of *Ivanhoe* himself, and almost expected to see the days of tournaments and queens of love and beauty revived.

"He is certainly very, very graceful," said she, shading her eyes to catch the last glimpse of his knight-like figure, yet vexed at being forced to bring him in lordly contrast to the contemned Rover, assured that in every thing but outward show, Rover transcended the southern nabob. "But I dare say he is very proud, and the maiden that he will wed must also be proud and rich, as she will be beautiful and accomplished." And with a half-suppressed sigh at the inequalities of fortune's gifts, she resumed her occupation, which naturally led her thoughts back to rural life and cottage scenes, and it was not long before she was indulging most heroic scorn for every joy dependent on wealth or fortune.

Clara sat one evening alone with her mother, her head bent over her work. Whenever she was thus

situated, her secret weighed heavily on her heart, and the dread of detection was never absent from her mind. If Mrs. Stanley addressed her suddenly, she would start and turn pale—if she looked upon her earnestly, she would tremble and blush, and sometimes she would talk at random, and commit a thousand inconsistencies. She rejoiced at the entrance of a neighbour, for it saved her the trouble of talking, and left her to the indulgence of her own thoughts. Mrs. Morton, the lady who now made her appearance, was only desirous of listeners, for she came laden with news she was eager to impart before she could be forestalled in the office.

"This is a very unpleasant affair about that young pedler," said Mrs. Morton; "have you heard of it?"

Clara's ears tingled at these words, and she held her breath to listen. Mrs. Stanley expressed her ignorance, and Mrs. Morton proceeded.

"You recollect that a shocking murder and robbery were perpetrated not very long since in an adjoining town, and that great rewards were offered for the apprehension of the murderer. It seems they have discovered a gang of pedlers, who are going about murdering and plundering in every direction. Some one who knew the gentleman who has been lately murdered, says he can swear to one of the watches among the jewels of the young pedler who has been sauntering about here. He says he has seen it in the gentleman's possession, and has no doubt he is both a robber and a murderer. They have taken up the young man upon suspicion, and he is now

confined in jail. The probability is he will be hung."

"It is indeed shocking to hear of such crimes," replied Mrs. Stanley, "when the actors, too, are brought so near our own homes. I thought there was something very suspicious about that young man, and I feared he might be troublesome to us."

She looked at Clara as she spoke, but she seemed to take no interest in the conversation, remaining perfectly still, with her head bowed, so that the lamp shone brightly on the ringlets that shaded her face, leaving her features in a still deeper shade.

While Mrs. Morton went on with earnestness and volubility, describing all she knew of the event in exaggerated colours, Clara rose softly and left the room. She stepped cautiously through the passage, and down the steps, opened the gate with a noiseless touch, and then ran like lightning through the street. It was a moonlight night, and she could see her own shadow flitting on every wall, lengthening into spectral dimensions, as she flew on, as if the avenger of blood was behind. She slackened not her pace, even while ascending the hill on which her brother's house was situated, nor paused till she reached the avenue of trees that stood in long stately lines in front of the mansion. For a moment she stopped, and looked back at the light that glimmered from her mother's window, like a solitary star, luring the wanderer home—then renewing her flight, she found herself all at once in the presence of Gertrude, who was sitting alone in her chamber, little dreaming of so strange an interrup-

tion. She rose in unspeakable alarm at Clara's entrance, whose appearance fully justified the feeling. Her face was of ashy paleness, her lips parted and quivering, and her long hair hung unbound over her shoulders in damp clinging masses.

"Clara, dear Clara," exclaimed Gertrude, "tell me what has happened! You know nothing of Edward? Speak!"

"Is Edward gone! Thank heaven!" uttered Clara, and sinking into a chair, she burst into tears. Gertrude threw her arms around her, and held her sobbing head against her bosom, till, like a wearied child, she gradually ceased her tears. The hot pressure on her brain seemed loosened, but there was anguish in her heart. There was but one sound in her ears—"He will in all probability be hung!" There was but one image before her eyes—Rover, a dying victim to a false accusation. She believed him as guiltless of crime as her own brother was, and the one strong purpose of her soul was to liberate him, at the hazard of her own liberty, and life itself, if it were necessary. She had read of Helen Mar, who followed into captivity the Scottish chieftain; of the devoted Lavalette, who effected the escape of her husband from the walls of a prison by clothing him in her own garments, and assuming his bondage instead. Impulse and action were almost simultaneous with Clara. She stopped not to think of the censure of the world, the reproaches of her friends. Rover in prison—exposed to an ignominious death, alone filled her mind. The circumstances of Edward's absence, who had been called

away upon some unexpected business, was favourable to her design, for she was sure of the co-operation of Gertrude.

"Dear Gertrude," said she, "I cannot tell you the cause of my grief, but if you love me, do not refuse what I am going to ask of you."

"I do love you, Clara, for more than your own sake, and mysterious as you are to-night, I am ready to promise that whatever you ask shall be granted, assured that it will be nothing but what justice may require and affection bestow."

"Thanks, a thousand thanks," cried Clara. "Then, quick, dear Gertrude, lend me the cloak, hood, and Mob Cap, which you wore when Edward first met you, and say not a word of what you have done to a human being. Oh! Gertrude, you look as if you were going to deny me!" and Clara clasped her hands supplicatingly together, as if her life depended on the boon.

"I would do any thing but suffer you to expose yourself to danger," said Gertrude, a bright ray flitting over her face at meeting a spirit so congenial to her own. "Any thing that will not serve as a barrier to separate you hereafter from Washington Graham."

"Talk not of Washington Graham," cried Clara, impatiently; "I think not of him, I care not for him—nor is there danger to me. Hasten, I will do nothing but what your own generous, uncalculating heart would prompt me to do."

Gertrude withdrew a moment, and returned with her masquerade dress, which she kept as a precious

memento of her life's most romantic scenes. "My Clara," said she as she entered, "the sight of these makes me almost wish I had again the task of winning the heart which I first learned to prize beneath their muffling shades. Never, never shall I forget the hour when Edward breathed into Aunt Bridget's ear the story of his love for the high and lofty Widow Clifton."

"Tell me," cried Clara, as she hastily wrapped her youthful person in the ancient cloak, "if Edward had been in danger before you married him, what would you have done to save him?"

"What would I have done!" repeated Gertrude, passionately, "I would have died to save him. Had I ten thousand lives, I would peril them all for him at this moment, so entirely, so devotedly do I love him."

Clara could have worshipped her for this burst of enthusiasm, sanctioning as it did her own purposed devotion, and with firmer hand she tied the mob cap under her chin, put on the green spectacles, and drew the hood over her head. Notwithstanding Clara's distress, Gertrude could not forbear smiling at her antiquated little figure, wondering whether she had ever looked as obselete herself. "Now speed thee, dear Clara, and heaven bless thy purpose, whatever it may be," cried she, leading her down the steps of the piazza.

Clara was obliged to gather her cloak round her, as it trailed on the ground, and impeded her walking. Then she recollected, that if so aged a person as she

appeared to be, were seen running, it would excite suspicion, and she tried to fashion her movements to the character she had assumed. She met several boys, who terrified her by hallooing in her ear, "Good-night, grandmother—what will you take for your spectacles?" Without turning her head, she walked on with quicker steps till she arrived at the prison. She had been there before to visit a poor black woman, who was very sick, and who had been accused of an attempt to poison a white family. She died in prison, and her innocence was proved too late. She knew the jailer, too, a simple, kind-hearted man; and when in faltering accents, which might well pass for the trembling utterance of age, she requested admittance to the pedler, (that hateful name almost choked Clara, for she had never breathed it aloud since she had first known Rover,) the good jailer immediately granted her admission. Rover was seated in a remote corner of the gloomy apartment, his head resting on his hand, the dim light scarcely defining the dark outlines of his figure. He raised his dark eyes upon her entrance, and they flashed with lamp-like brilliancy through the shades that surrounded him. He was in danger and disgrace, and Clara felt that if she had resolved to act a heroic part, she would do it in the true spirit of a heroine. She drew near him without speaking, while he, with the courtesy which adorns a prison as much as a drawing-room, rose and offered her his seat, wondering what good old lady was so kind as to visit him in this extremity. Clara sunk into the chair, and gathering courage now the critical moment had arrived,

untied the strings of her cloak and cap, and emerged from the disguise like the evening star from behind a gray cloud.

"Clara Stanley, by all that is lovely!" exclaimed he; and the graceful pedler knelt at her feet. A bright triumphant smile played about his lips. "Welcome imprisonment, danger, and death itself, if they bring with them consolations like this. You believe me innocent, then," added he, "or deeming me guilty, have come to pity and—"

"To save!" interrupted Clara, "to save, believing you innocent. In this apparel you can pass out undiscovered, and fly the wretches who seek your life. As for me, there is no danger. They will release me as soon as they learn that I am here."

"What! leave you here alone in this dismal place, the long dark night, exposed to present suffering and future calumny, that I may elude dangers, which after all, are imaginary, for my life is in no peril! I can produce such proofs of my innocence as will cover my accusers with shame. No! no! I cannot leave this cell. It is transformed into the garden of Eden—since I have here learned what I have hitherto dared to doubt, the truth, the tenderness, the heroism of woman's love."

"And shall I have braved every thing in vain?" cried Clara, imploringly. "Your innocence will serve you nothing when law in its strength is once aimed against you. Even in this very cell I saw a poor creature breathe her last, accused, though guiltless, condemned and broken-hearted. And I shall be as safe

here as in my own chamber. The jailer knows me—my mother has been kind to his children, and he will be kind to me; I shall immediately be released. What! still unyielding? Have you upbraided *me* for coldness and pride, and fear of the world's censure?—but who now is cold and proud, and unwilling to incur a debt of gratitude?"

Rover fixed his steadfast gaze on Clara's now glowing countenance. She seemed transformed. Her eyes, that had always bowed abashed beneath the beams of his, were riveted intently on his face—and the hand which had never willingly been abandoned to his hold, now clasped his, in the energy of her address.

"Clara," said he, and his voice trembled with deep emotion, "this is no time for deception—on one condition only will I fly. Should my fame be cleared, and my character proved upright and pure, will you allow me to declare my love before the world, and consent to unite your fate to mine, however poor and lowly I may be?"

"I will consent to any thing that obtains a mother's sanction," replied Clara, in low but firm accents; then snatching up the cloak, and throwing it over his shoulders, she entreated him to hasten, as footsteps were heard echoing through the passage. There was no time to be lost, and he hastily gathered the folds of his cloak around him; but when he bent his head for the mob cap and spectacles, unconquerable mirth struggled with the tumultuous feeling excited in his bosom. Even Clara, though wrought upon by a thousand fears, could not forbear laughing at the

ludicrous effect of the headdress; then she wept to think she could have laughed at such a moment. She was sure that Madame Lavallette did not laugh when she liberated her husband from the gloomy Concierge, and he must have looked equally grotesque in her French mantle and veil. The cold sound of the turning key banished every thought but her separation from Rover. "And now," whispered she, "Rover, farewell—take the wings of the morning, that all pursuit may be vain."

The gray folds of the cloak were for one moment wrapped closely around her, and a soft deep voice murmured in her ear,—“farewell, generous, noble, and devoted Clara. Your holy confidence shall never be betrayed. You shall yet find me all your trusting heart believed.”

The door slowly creaked open. Clara sprang into the darkest corner of the cell, while the prisoner passed out to the jailer, who remained on the outer side. She trembled, for she distinctly heard the latter mutter, as he fumbled about the keyhole, “the old woman might have had the manners to speak to a body. She strided by me as fierce as a dragoon. I wonder what she wanted of the pedler. I’ll go in and see if all is safe.”

He reopened the door, looked round the cell, and was about to close it, when returning and shading his eyes with his hand, “I thought I saw something white in this corner. As sure as I am alive it is a woman! Bless my stars, if it is not Miss Clara Stanley!”



Clara's first impulse was to rush by him and escape through the open door; her next was to remain and prevent him from pursuing Rover.

"Why, where is the pedler?" cried he, looking from side to side in amazement and dismay. "Ah, ha! I know what made the old woman walk so fast. But I'll catch him yet."

"No, no!" exclaimed Clara, springing forward, and holding him by the arm. "You cannot be so cruel. He is innocent, and you might have his life to answer for."

"But it is as much as my place is worth to let him go," said the jailer, struggling to free himself from Clara's hold, whose slender fingers seemed gifted with wondrous strength.

"It is a cruel office," cried Clara, "and I would not wish to keep it; and if you do lose it you shall have a better one instead. My brother shall exert his influence, and you shall not be blamed. Dear, good jailer! do not be angry, but remain quiet here. I never asked a favour of you before, and you have said my mother has been kind to you."

"So she has, and a blessed woman she is," replied he; "and so have you, too, as to that matter; but what makes you take on so about it? Is that young pedler any kin of yours?"

"No," answered Clara, blushing; "but I knew he was innocent, and I pitied him—sorry, indeed, should I be, if I could not be kind to any but my own kindred."

Clara continued her pleadings, and, in short, as the

jailer said, had "such a taking, coaxing way, there was no getting away from her," so that she at last persuaded him to let the matter rest, and suffer it to be supposed that the prisoner had broke loose from confinement. He promised, too, to say nothing about her agency, and to permit her to depart unmolested.

"But you must not go bare-headed and bare-necked through the damp air," said he, "the folks will think you crazy. Stop till I get you a bonnet and shawl of my wife's. I can get them without disturbing her, and you can send them back in the morning."

Clara thanked him for his consideration, and the fear of being taken up for a crazy woman induced her to accept the offer. But when he brought her a wonderful-looking shawl, flowered all over with beasts and birds, and a straw bonnet which looked as if it had survived a hundred fashions, she feared the danger still existed, and that she would lose her own identity in the various transformations of the evening. The good-natured jailer laughed heartily, and said "there was a good deal in things belonging to a person, and fitting them, after all, for they became his wife mightily."

Clara showered down her blessings upon him, and returned home, while, like Collins' Passions,

"By turns she felt her glowing mind  
Disturb'd, delighted, raised, refined."

"How shall I meet my mother?" thought she, when she reached her own door, and she stood on the threshold pale and trembling. The exultation of

having performed a generous action no longer buoyed up her spirits with unnatural excitement. She felt that she was a daughter, acting independently of a mother's sanction, and she shrunk from the terrors of her penetrating gaze. A glance through the window, from which the light streamed in glimmering rays, relieved her worst fears. She saw her mother quietly seated at a little work-table, her Bible opened before her, entirely absorbed by its sacred pages. Clara was too much accustomed to pass her evening in her chamber, for her absence to excite observation, and Mrs. Stanley usually sat up till a late hour, the tranquillity of the night harmonizing with her chastened and religious tone of character. Clara stole softly up stairs, hastily divested herself of her strange attire, and, smoothing down her disordered locks, endeavoured to compose herself to rest. But no slumber that night visited the couch of Clara. Her nerves were unstrung. The singing of the wind against the window made her start from her pillow. The clouds drifting over the moon seemed the shadows of horsemen in the fleetness of pursuit.

The flight of the pedler became a matter of three days' wonder in town, during which time active measures were taken to discover the place of his retreat, but in vain. Intelligence was received, just as they had given up the pursuit as hopeless, that the real murderer was apprehended, who, by a voluntary confession of his crime, had exonerated the young pedler from the slightest imputation of guilt, who again made his appearance in the village, the hero and lion of the

day. But what was the astonishment of the good people when it was reported that Clara Stanley was actually going to be married at her brother's, where a splendid wedding was to be given, and then they were to start off to some distant place, where the pedler was to give up his profession, and try to pass off for a gentleman! There was more reality and truth in these reports than is generally the case in village gossip. The nuptials of Clara and young Rover were in full preparation, through the influence of the all-conquering Gertrude. Edward and Mrs. Stanley were induced to yield their consent. Rover declared his resolution of relinquishing his present course of life, and embracing some honourable profession, in which the energies of his mind could be called into exercise, and Clara, who was, perhaps, a little disappointed at things going on so smoothly, where she expected so much opposition, expressed her willingness to go with him to the world's end, if it were necessary. She shrunk from the idea of a bridal festival, but Gertrude insisted upon arranging every thing her own way.

"If," said she, "you have shown yourself superior to the prejudices of the world, in the independence of your choice, let it see that you glory in acknowledging it."

But when she would have lavished upon her those tasteful gifts affection loves to bestow on such occasions, Clara put them from her, refusing to wear any thing more adorning than a plain muslin robe.

"If I am to be the bride of a poor man," said she, "the decorations of wealth are not for me."

She thought she had subdued every trace of her once besetting sin, but when she sat in her own room, overcome by those feelings which press home on the heart of the most thoughtless on their bridal day, she saw the unexpected apparition of Washington Graham sweeping by on his raven black horse, in all the pride of conscious wealth and aristocracy; she turned away from the sight in mortification and dismay.

"Gertrude must have known of his coming," said she, brushing away the tears that trembled on her cheek, "and yet she gave me no warning. I cannot bear that he should be present, to look down in scorn on one equal, if not superior to him in every gift of nature and of God. May Rover forgive me this last lingering moment of weakness, unworthy of her who is blest with a heart like his."

The shades of evening came on, and Clara, in her robe of unadorned white, with the bridal rose wreathed in her hair, was waiting, with palpitating heart, the anticipated summons. She was already at her brother's, in an apartment adjoining the drawing-rooms, which were fast filling with guests.

"I am proud of my sister," exclaimed Gertrude, kissing her cheek, now pallid from agitation.

"Be not angry, dear Clara; though I have pleaded the cause of Rover with all the interest so romantic a love could inspire, I cannot but feel for my cousin. Washington Graham is here, returned once more to devote himself to the task which I once dared to promise him would prove successful."

"Never, never mention his name to me again," cried

Clara, "nor seek to raise in me emotions which sometimes triumph over my better nature. I have been the child of vanity, and once sacrificed even my integrity to vain display and heartless ambition. And now, when I have been struggling with my indwelling enemy, in the strength of disinterested love alone, and feel as if I had come off conquering, let not your hand, Gertrude, supply my vanquished foe with new arms to rob me of my victory."

The sudden unfolding of the doors prevented Gertrude's reply. A flame of light poured its effulgence into Clara's eyes, and every thing swam in confusion before her gaze. The room appeared to turn round with a circular motion, and every figure to blend together in strange confusion. She was only conscious of being led forward into the centre of the room by a hand that trembled as much as her own, and of hearing a buzzing sound around her like the murmur of many voices.

"Be not dismayed, dear Clara," said the bridegroom, in a low voice, in her ear; "your generous confidence shall never be betrayed."

Clara, who had been gradually raising her eyes from the floor, as they recovered the sense of vision, perceived that every face was turned towards the bridegroom, with a stare of amazement. It was more than curiosity. It was wonder mixed with incredulity. Involuntarily following the direction of their glances, she raised her eyes to the face of him on whose arm she was leaning, and a wild exclamation escaped her lips. It was Washington Graham that supported

her: Washington Graham, with all that high-bred elegance of dress and manner, which distinguished him from all others. The waving hair carelessly shading the brow of marble whiteness, the complexion, the air, were Washington Graham's; but the dark, lustrous eyes, whose glance had so often thrilled to her very soul, and which were now bent on her pale, bewildered countenance, were the eyes of Rover.

"Clara, dear Clara," cried he, "the hue of the gipsy, the garb of the pedler, alone are wanting, but the faith of the lover, the vows of the bridegroom, remain. Forgive the deception I have practised in concert with my romantic cousin here, whose guardian genius has been constantly exerted in my behalf, to prove whether I could be loved for myself alone."

"Yes," added Gertrude, turning towards the company with inimitable grace, thus diverting their attention from Clara's unconquerable emotion, "suffer me to finish the explanation. I know all our friends are interested in hearing. My cousin came hither, disgusted with recent proofs of the treachery of those who were attracted towards him by the mere distinctions of wealth and fortune, and laying aside their gaudy trappings, he assumed the disguise of a poor and lowly man."

"But what upon earth made him think of passing off for a pedler?" exclaimed an old lady, who had been rubbing her spectacles half a dozen times, to ascertain if she could see distinctly. Every one smiled at the sudden interrogation.

"I had written to him," rejoined Gertrude, "of Clara's history, and of her invincible horror of the very name; and he, in the proud confidence of his own unborrowed excellence, resolved to encounter the most obdurate prejudices, that he might have the glory of conquering them. How he has succeeded, your own congratulating hearts can now bear witness."

"But I can't for my life think," continued the persevering old lady, "why she didn't find him out. I know nobody would have deceived me in that way."

Gertrude spoke in a low voice to Washington Graham, who, gently withdrawing from the trembling hand that clung to his arm for support, smiled and left the apartment. Clara followed him with her eyes, as if she feared he was about to vanish like the phantasmagoria of a dream, and there was a dead pause in the whole assembly. In a few minutes the door re-opened, and a young man appeared, dressed in a plain suit of the darkest green, his hair combed in shading waves over his darkened brow, his complexion tinged with the same gipsy dye—"Rover!" exclaimed Clara, and sprang forward with a bound of irrepressible delight. Every remaining doubt vanished, and she wept in the fullness of her joy.

The old lady put on her spectacles, and looking close in his face, declared she would never have known him from Adam—only there was a sort of a look out of the eyes, that was like nobody else in the world but himself.

There was now a general rush of congratulation towards Clara, and she was almost smothered with caresses from those who, a few hours before, thought it would be a disgrace to visit her again. The bride of Washington Graham was a very different person from the bride of a pedler, but Clara's heart whispered that Rover and Washington Graham were the same.

"Well," said the lady of the spectacles, after the bridegroom had resumed his character as Washington Graham, and the wedding was concluded, "I never saw any thing like these Stanleys, for the luck that follows them; but I would not advise any of the young folks to get such romantic notions into their heads, for all that. Every old woman with a mob cap don't turn into a rich young widow, nor every pedler into a fine gentleman."

## The Beauty Transformed.

"CATHERINE," said young Meredith to his sister, as she was hastily passing him, on the way to the drawing-room, "stop a moment, and let me speak with you."

Catherine paused reluctantly, for she was eager to welcome her expected guest.

"I have invited a friend here, to-night, to whom I wish you to be particularly attentive."

"Ah!" said Catherine; "is he very handsome, and rich, and fashionable? For he must be either one or all, to make it an object for me to be particularly attentive to him."

"As to his beauty, I leave you to decide—men are no judges of each other's beauty—I know not the extent of his wealth—but one thing I do know, I am under obligations to him I never can repay."

Catherine looked inquiringly, and Meredith proceeded:—

"You remember my journey over the mountains last summer, the upsetting of the carriage, my broken leg, my being detained so long in a log cabin, sick, and as some thought, dying. Well, surely you recollect, Catherine, the young man, my fellow traveller, who, though a stranger, lingered there with me, till I was in a state of comparative ease, and watched over me like a guardian angel—I do believe, under heaven, I owe my life to his tenderness and care—

what was my delight to meet him, unexpectedly, a few hours since in the streets! I insisted upon his coming home with me, immediately, but this his engagements would not permit. He promised, however, to devote the evening to me, and I trust you will not forget the high claims he has upon your gratitude and consideration."

"To be sure I will not," answered Catherine. "I will be as polite as possible, for I feel under infinite obligations to him, but as to entertaining him, I fear it will be out of my power. I never know what to say to these very good pattern people. I am sorry he happened to come to-night, as we expect so much company. It is really unfortunate," said she, to herself, in a low voice, as she hurried into the parlour, to greet, as she supposed, far more attractive and distinguished guests, than her brother's grave and quiet nurse. She knew she ought to be very grateful to him, but she imagined he must be a very dull companion, for Frank had been comparatively dull since his acquaintance with him, and always quoted Mr. Clifton, when he wished to support any argument in favour of morality, virtue, and religion. She was tired of his name, for he was Frank's oracle, and *her* oracles were among the gay and fashionable of the land.

Frank and Catherine Meredith had neither father nor mother. An aunt, the widowed sister of Mrs. Meredith, was at the head of the household establishment, and the delegated guardian of Catherine's youth. Frank had been educated abroad, while Catherine was

placed in one of the most fashionable boarding schools in the country. When the brother and sister met, after a separation of many years, in the home of their youth, they were as strangers to each other. Each vainly sought to read in the other's face and person, the image impressed on their juvenile memory. The shy and somewhat awkward boy, had become the self-possessed and elegant young man—the slender, pale, and stooping little girl, the graceful, well-proportioned, and blooming young woman. They both appeared appropriate representatives of the beings whose names they bore, and well fitted to adorn the station they were destined to fill. Mr. and Mrs. Meredith were both devotees of wealth and fashion. They had dedicated their children at the same altar, but being called away by sudden disease, they could only bequeath to them their wealth and their example. Mrs. Milner, their maternal aunt, stood in a mother's place to Catherine, and believing, like her mother, that beauty, dress, and manners made up all that is really desirable and lovely in woman, she resolved that Catherine should be a model of perfection in these three grand essentials. Nature had furnished her with the first, wealth with the second, and education the third. Frank was proud of his sister, Mrs. Milner was proud of her niece—she was flattered, caressed, and imitated. Is it strange that she should be vain? Frank left his sister with regret to take the mountain journey mentioned above, and when he returned again after his hair-breadth escape and protracted absence, she seemed more than ever endeared to his

affections. But whether from the consciousness of having escaped great danger from sickness, or the companionship of Clifton, he was unaccountably changed, or, as Catherine declared, unaccountably *dull*. She loved her brother, and felt bound by every moral obligation to his friend, but he was the last person she wished to see. She felt an internal conviction she should dislike *him*, and that he would dislike *her*, and that his presence would be a restraint on her gaiety and amusements. On this occasion she was dressed with unusual splendour. Mrs. Milner, who always presided over the decorations of her toilet, with as much gravity as a chief magistrate over the destinies of a nation, declared that nothing was wanting to complete the elegance of her attire, very judiciously adding, she had never seen her look half so beautiful, and that with such a face, and such a dress, she might make a conquest of any heart she chose. Catherine entered the room with a cheek flushed with the consciousness of beauty, and an eye that sought in the glances of others the admiration, she doubted not, was her spontaneous tribute. She was soon surrounded by a circle of flatterers, who so completely engrossed her attention, she entirely forgot her brother and his dreaded friend, and her spirits, elated by vanity, effervesced in the loud and frequent laugh.

"Who is that gentleman with your brother?" said one of her companions, as an accidental opening in the group revealed him, standing directly opposite, with a young man in black by his side, both apparently waiting for an opportunity to approach

her. The unmeaning laugh died on her lips. There was something in the stranger's aspect that rebuked her frivolity, and shamed her into silence.

"Can that be Mr. Clifton?" thought she. "How different from what I imagined he would be!"

The next moment her brother pressed forward alone, and drawing her arm through his, whispered in her ear, "For mercy's sake, Catherine, leave those grinning idiots, and try to appear like a sensible girl, the rest of the evening. I never was so mortified in my life, that Clifton should see you for the first time to such disadvantage. He is so very peculiar, so different from every other person, and I am so desirous that you should please him."

The heart of the vain and flattered Catherine rose rebellious at this speech. Frank had never spoken so harshly to her before. She determined to show her resentment by disregarding his injunctions, and when she received Mr. Clifton's bow of introduction, her countenance expressed as plain as words could speak it, "admire me as I am, for I will not change to please you or any individual in the universe." Two moments after, she would have bartered all the incense she had been so eagerly accepting, for the power to recall that haughty and ungracious look, so ungratefully bestowed, yet so mildly received. "Frank is to blame for all," said she to herself, trying to soothe her self-anger, by throwing the whole burthen on him; "he always described him as a kind of hum-drum, prosing being. When I asked him if he were hand-



some, he answered me evasively, as if he were just not ugly. Men were no judges of each other's beauty! As to wealth and fashion, he knew nothing about it!—as if any one could be so graceful, who had not been educated in refinement and in the most elegant society! And then, to crown the whole, for Frank to make me so angry at the very moment when I ought to have been most amiable! Oh! that I had been more on my guard!"

Poor Frank was, as he had said, deeply mortified and disappointed. He was a great believer in first impressions. He loved and venerated Clifton more than any other human being. He knew there was much in Catherine's character, entirely uncongenial to his own, but he relied on her beauty and attractive manners to disarm his judgment, at first sight, and after that, he hoped miracles from the influence he was sure Clifton would obtain over her mind. Never could he have beheld her under circumstances more to her disadvantage, and Frank, who had been looking forward to the moment when he should introduce his sister to his friend, as an era in his existence, felt as if he could never forgive her the disappointment she had caused. There was an embarrassing pause after the introduction. Frank, when alone with Clifton, could talk with him for hours, unrestrainedly, but the fashionable atmosphere he now breathed chilled the expression of his natural feelings, and he knew Clifton would be disgusted with what was artificial. It was strange he had never been sensible before of his sister's entire want of simplicity of cha-

acter. He forgot that he had always seen her surrounded by beings as artificial as herself, and that now every look and action was seen through the medium in which he fancied his friend beheld them. Catherine was not suffered long to remain passive—she was solicited for music—"Are you fond of music, sir?" said she, addressing Clifton, for the first time.

"Extremely so," was his reply. The tone of his voice was singularly pleasing. There was no laboured accent to give effect to his words.

"Now, I shall charm him," thought Catherine, "in spite of all his gravity and reserve, for no voice can compare with mine in compass, or brilliancy, and my execution is declared to be unrivalled."

When she was seated at the piano, Frank bent over her, under the pretence of arranging the music, and whispered in her ear, "Play some of those fine marches, but do not sing any of those foolish songs, you are accustomed to do. Not to-night, for my sake."

Catherine commenced a slow and beautiful march, not for his sake, but for the sake of the handsome and cold-looking stranger, whose admiration she resolved to win. She glanced her eye carelessly towards him, as she concluded, and she thought his countenance was lighted up with pleasure, but she was vexed to see that he was looking down, and she feared the soft expression she had thrown into her face, while playing, had been lost upon him. "Oh, sing this song, Miss Meredith," "and this," reiterated many voices, "the instrument is nothing without your singing."

"I cannot sing to-night," said she; "I am hoarse—I have a bad cold."

"Are you afraid of singing profane songs before the young parson?" said one, who passed for a wit, in a low voice behind her.

"Ridiculous!" exclaimed Catherine; "there is no young parson here."

"Indeed! I thought the gentleman in black was one—and you have looked so grave and solemn since his entrance, I imagined he had told you it was a sin to smile, and perhaps to sing."

He turned as he spoke to one of those vain, voluptuous, and unmeaning songs, to which fashion sometimes sets its almost omnipotent seal. She had not the moral courage to refuse, and urged by her dread of ridicule, and desire to show her independence, she began in one of the sweetest and most melodious voices in the world, strains which made Frank groan in spirit, and wish the piano in the bottom of the sea. Intoxicated with the applause she received, she forgot her scruples, and continued to sing and play—her aunt nodding and smiling at her, as she went waving about the room, courting compliments for Catherine, that she might repeat them to her, when the company had gone. When Catherine rose from the instrument her brother and Mr. Clifton had disappeared. She looked in vain among the groups of faces for that dark and serious eye, whose expression was a mystery to her understanding. With mortified feelings she retired to her chamber, after the company had dispersed, and placing the lights so as to shine with

full resplendence on a mirror, she took a long and deliberate survey of herself, before she divested herself of her glittering ornaments. She compared herself in imagination with all the bright forms which had recently beamed on her gaze, and she could not but exult in her own pre-eminence. "I feared I had grown ugly," said she, turning her beautiful profile towards the glass, after gazing on the full reflection of her features, "*he* looked so cold and distant upon me. If I have not appeared handsome to him, to-night, I can never hope to charm him, for this dress is superb, and this bandeau of pearl, contrasts so finely with my dark hair." She unbound her long shining hair, and as it hung in luxuriance around her, the thought flashed into her mind, that Clifton might be an admirer of simplicity, and she resolved to steal upon his senses the next time they met, in all the sweetness of undecorated maiden loveliness. She would wear pure, virgin white, her hair should fall in natural waves on her neck, she would look all that was gentle and modest. It never entered into the heart of Catherine, that man could be enslaved by any other charm than beauty, or that beauty, all radiant as hers, could fail to captivate the being exposed to its influence. She had never dreamed that an eye less bright might possess a holier charm, or a form less fair inspire a deeper emotion. She had never been taught to think that there might be something enshrined within, an indwelling beauty, an immortal principle, capable of giving grace and lustre to features unattractive in themselves. From a child, every

instruction she had received seemed to have for the ultimate object, external attraction. She was excluded from the sun and air, those "chartered libertines," lest they should add a deeper shade to the roses and lilies of nature—her hands were kept imprisoned in gloves, to preserve their snowy tints; she was not permitted to read or study by candle-light, lest she should dim the starry brightness of her eyes, or to take long walks, lest her feet should become enlarged by too much exercise.

"Katy, my dear, don't run, it will make your complexion red—Katy, my love, don't eat too much, it will make your complexion coarse."

A thousand such admonitions as these were associated with the memory of her mother, and never had her aunt suffered them to be forgotten for want of reiteration. Mrs. Milner even exceeded her in the minuteness of her instructions. She compelled her to wear a linen mask, during the long summer nights, to enhance the delicacy of her skin, and to put on a deep bonnet, in her own room, whenever she sat by an open window. Thus brought up from infancy in the worse than Egyptian bondage of fashion, poor Catherine had no conception of the unfettered joys of nature. When at school, she was confined within the walls of a city, and obliged to submit to the iron rules of an ultra-fashionable instructress. To do her justice, she was a docile pupil, and graduated with all the honours of the institution.

Frank Meredith had accompanied Clifton to his own room, and sat with him long after midnight. It

seemed that Clifton possessed the master-key to his soul, for it was only when he was alone with him, that he suffered his thoughts to flow out unchecked, and expressed the desires and hopes that were struggling into existence within his bosom.

"Clifton," said he, "I have not lived since you parted from me; I have been dragging on a joyless being, incapable of feeling sympathy, or imparting delight. Catherine calls me dull and stupid, and so I am, but she knows not how vain and valueless all my former pursuits now appear to me—she knows not with what loathing I turn from the false pleasures she so eagerly pursues."

"I know not," repeated Clifton, in a reproachful voice; "are you convinced yourself that they are incapable of satisfying the vast desires of an immortal mind, are you conscious of the fire of eternity burning within you, and can you sit down in silence, and see your own and only sister endeavouring to quench what is unquenchable, to destroy what is indestructible, without warning or rebuke? Frank, I did hope better things of you."

"I know I have been wrong," answered Frank, ingenuously, "but I want *your* moral courage. A thousand times have I been on the point of declaring to her all that has been passing in my heart; the reflections that were awakened on my sick bed, the influence of your example and conversation, but I have always been interrupted by some vanity in the shape of dress, or my good aunt, or some fashionable dangler—I never could find the favourable moment—and though

I can feel, deeply, keenly feel, I cannot find language to give utterance to my thoughts. Catherine would call me crazy if I should tell her what is passing within me, when she deems me merely listless and unoccupied. To tell the truth, I have not dared to contend with the unhallowed influences around her, while I become more and more angry to see her yielding to their power. Yet, believe me, Clifton, she is not so vain and foolish as she forced you to think her this night. Nature intended her for something better than a *mere belle*."

"Your sister is beautiful," said Clifton, "beautiful and young, and greatly to be pitied. I could have wept to see her adorned like a victim to be sacrificed on the altar of a godless world—I thought of my own sister—as fair, and oh! how much more lovely, whom three months since I consigned to the dust, and I asked myself, what hope or consolation would be my portion now, if the bloom of *her* youth had been wasted in scenes like these. She died in her sixteenth spring—she died in my arms, with the smile of rapture on her pallid lips, and anticipated glory gleaming from her closing eye." Clifton paused and looked upward with a heavenly expression, then turning towards Frank with an earnest and fervent manner, "Do you love your sister?"

"Better than any thing in this world, except yourself."

"And with this love, then, glowing in your heart, and believing as you do, in the existence of that eternal world, of which she has scarcely been allowed

to dream, convinced of her accountability to God, for all the gifts he has bestowed, an accountability which has never been impressed on *her* conscience, what would be your reflections if you saw her struck down by the angel of death, even as my sweet and blooming Jane, conscious that you had never even whispered in her ear—'This is not all, my sister—this bright, but shadowy scene—eternity's beyond!'"—

"Clifton," said Frank, impetuously, "you have saved my life—I know I should have died on the mountains, when that burning fever was drying up my veins, if you had not watched over me with more than woman's tenderness. But this is not half the debt. You roused my mind from its long and deadly lethargy, and it has ever since been heaving and struggling for that glorious liberty of the children of God, you taught me to pant after. But I am not yet free—I am too weak to help others break their bonds. Do this for me, and I will bless you. Come and remain with us, and be our Mentor and our guide. Catherine is scarcely more a devotee of the world than I was, when first you knew me. Be not afraid of coming in contact with vice and folly—we must sometimes handle the dross of earth, to extract its gold. You will not be contaminated, and we shall be purified."

"It pains me, my friend," replied Clifton, "that you should ascribe a power to me that belongs to God alone. If I have been instrumental in his hands of exciting in you a thirst for living waters, give thanks to Him from whom those living waters flow—I am

but a fellow-pilgrim with you, through the wilderness of life, and having, like you, drank deep of the feverish streams of pleasure, and found them unsatisfying, I have been directed to a pure and purifying fountain, and I could but ask you to taste and live."

Clifton could not be persuaded to make the house of his friend his home, but he consented to remain near him, for a time, and to visit him, as often as he could be assured of finding him at liberty to act as a *rational being*. He promised, too, to converse with Catherine, as a rational and immortal being, and to persevere in the task, though he might meet with displeasure and disgust from her. It was a novel task, indeed, to be imposed on a young and handsome man, to tell a flattered beauty of her faults instead of offering incense to her vanity, but the rays of Catherine's beauty fell as coldly on Clifton's eye, as the sunbeams reflected from a sheet of polar ice—as he had told her brother, he looked upon her with the sincerest pity for her own sake, and with sentiments more tender for his, for his soul clave unto Frank's, even as Jonathan's unto David, "with a love passing the love of woman." It was a love that stretched far beyond the limits of time, and followed its object through the unwasting ages of eternity.

Catherine adopted the plan of elegant simplicity she had previously arranged, and appeared without any ornament but a single white rose, wreathed in her dark locks. But with all her practised graces, and determination to be admired, she found it impossible to preserve with Clifton those artificial manners

for which she had been so much applauded. His graceful gravity checked the affected laugh, which so often rung without merriment. Whenever she met his mild, serious, yet deeply penetrating eye, she forgot to add a languishing softness, or sparkling brilliancy to her own. Absorbed in the contemplation of his singular and to her mysterious character, she, for almost the first time in her life, forgot herself, and looked and moved as nature prompted. As she listened to his conversation, so superior in intellect to what she was accustomed to hear, she felt ashamed that, instead of cultivating her powers of reason and expression, she had aimed at nothing higher than brilliant nonsense.

One evening she walked in the garden with Clifton and her brother, for it was sunset, and Mrs. Milner thought at that hour she might venture in the air with impunity. Clifton was an enthusiast, when speaking of the beauties of nature, and he never spoke of a tree or flower, without leading the thoughts to the divine mysteries of creation, and endeavouring to raise them to their great and glorious Author. Catherine was a skilful botanist, but here was a lore in which she was altogether unlearned. When she accompanied them in their walk, she thought to herself, "Now shall I have an opportunity of shining," but when Clifton began to speak of the beauties to which she directed his gaze, he soared so far beyond the limits of her capacities, she felt as if she were left grovelling behind. Frank gathered a beautiful rose, and gave his sister as they passed the bush on which

it was blossoming. She took it with a smile, and was about to place it in her bosom—"Oh, my God!" she passionately exclaimed, suddenly dropping the flower. A thorn had pierced her finger, and the blood stained its snowy surface.

Clifton started and a flush passed over his face. He turned towards her, but not to sympathize in so trivial an accident: "Miss Meredith," said he, "forgive me, if I speak with a plainness you are not wont to hear. It is inexpressibly painful to me, to hear the most holy and august name in the universe uttered irreverently. Even in prayer, I cannot breathe it, without melting with tenderness or trembling with awe."

Catherine turned pale at the solemnity of the rebuke, then reddened with anger, shame and astonishment, till, at length, unable to control her excited feelings, tears she could not hide gushed from her eyes.

"I did not mean to wound," said he; "forgive me, I ask once again, if I have spoken too harshly. But believe me, I address you as a friend, less flattering, perhaps, than many who bear that name, but more sincere. Angels rejoice when the lips of beauty unite with them in strains of adoration and praise of the source of uncreated glory, but angels weep, if beatified beings can weep, when youth and beauty live regardless of the high, the undeniable claims of their Maker on their soul."

There was an earnestness, a tenderness in his voice and manner, that disarmed her resentment, but as her

anger died away, her tears flowed more freely. "You are very, very solemn, Mr. Clifton," said she; "I spoke thoughtlessly; I know, I am too apt to do so; but I little dreamed I was giving *you* pain."

Frank felt for the distress of his sister, though he was delighted at her unexpected sensibility. He drew her arm through his, and leading her towards the summer-house, entreated Clifton to take advantage of the present calm and uninterrupted moment and converse with them both as if he were addressing a brother or a sister.

"A sister!" repeated Clifton; the words touched the chords of memory; "Miss Meredith, shall I speak to you of a sister, who was unutterably dear to my affections? who, one year since, was blooming in health as you now are, but who now sleeps in death? You say I am very solemn, and I now choose a solemn theme, but to me it is a delightful one, a glorious one."

Catherine shuddered. Death was associated in her mind with images of darkness and horror, for she thought only of the body returning to dust, consigned to corruption and the worm, not of the soul ascending to the God who gave it. It was an awful subject to her, yet she felt a curiosity, restrained by fear, to know how his young sister had met the conqueror's coming.

"Glorious!" exclaimed she—"oh! it must be terrible!"

"Death had no terrors for her," replied he, "though he came to her in the spring-time of her youth. She welcomed him as a messenger from God, whom she

loved as a reconciled Father, and laid her head on his cold bosom as gently as if she were reclining on a pillow of down. Do you ask me what it was that made her dying hour a scene of such holy tranquillity? It was faith in Him who had died to redeem her, who had himself passed through the portals of the tomb, and left behind him a long track of glory. 'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' were the last words she uttered, and had you seen the seraphic expression of her eye and the smile that lingered on her lips even after the spirit had departed, you would have felt with me the reality, the beauty, the grandeur of religion."

Catherine listened and wondered. The rays of the crimsoned west were reflected on the face of Clifton, through the parting boughs that shaded the window of the summer-house. Its usually pale hue was lighted up with a fervent glow, and his eyes beamed as she thought with more than earthly fire. And yet he was speaking of *death*, a subject, the mere mention of which never failed to blanch the roses of her cheek and freeze her blood with horror.

"Religion," thought she, "what is religion? Does it consist in such a life as mine? In dressing, shining, practising to be admired, in living but for flattery and display, in a life of idleness and dissipation?"

Thus Catherine's awakened conscience interrogated her when she retired to the solitude of her chamber, and a still, small voice within gave back the faithful negative. Lost in her new reflections, she did not notice the entrance of a servant who came loaded with

band-boxes, sent by the milliner and mantua-maker, containing articles for which she had been impatiently waiting. Mrs. Milner, who always followed these arrivals, and who never moved without a bustle, roused her from her reverie.

"Why, Catherine, my love," said she, "what is the matter, that you seem so indifferent about these beautiful dresses? You have been crying—spoiling your eyes and complexion—I know it by the red circle round them—what can be the matter? You have been moping these two or three days—ever since that Clifton has been here, and a most disagreeable young man he is, I am sure."

"Disagreeable, aunt," repeated Catherine, with some warmth.

"Yes, exceedingly so," replied Mrs. Milner; "he has not said a civil thing to you yet. It was kind in him to take care of Frank, when he was sick, and that is the only reason I tolerate him. I can't bear people who look as if they thought themselves so much better than other folks. He does not take any more notice of you than if you were his grandmother. I hope it is not that which makes you low spirited."

"No, indeed," said Catherine, her vanity, which had slumbered for a little while, piqued at the remark; "I do not care for his attention, but I am sure he is polite and kind. He has been speaking to me of his sister, a beautiful young girl, who died a short time since, and it was impossible not to be affected by the manner in which he described her death."

"I do not see the use of his talking to you about



these things," answered Mrs. Milner with some asperity; "it only serves to damp one's spirits, and does no good to any one—I always avoid them myself."

"But, aunt," said Catherine, "shall we not be obliged to think of them sometimes? If we must die ourselves—"

"Nonsense," interrupted Mrs. Milner. "I will not hear you talk in that gloomy strain. We ought to enjoy ourselves as much as possible in this world, and not trouble ourselves about leaving it till the time comes. Look at this superb dress. There is not another pattern in town—you must wear it to-morrow evening at Mrs. R.'s, for there is to be a splendid party there."

She unfolded the robe, richly ornamented with lace and novel decorations, before Catherine, whose eyes began to sparkle, as they were wont to do, in the contemplation of her finery, long and early acquired habits of vanity and love of admiration triumphing over the better feelings that were beginning to struggle in her heart. That night her thoughts were strange and confused. She tried in vain to sleep—at one moment the deep-toned voice of Clifton seemed ringing in her ears, rebuking her profane levity; at another the shrouded form of his once blooming sister, rose pale and cold before her shuddering gaze; then the glittering image of herself in her new attire, the centre of an admiring crowd, came dazzlingly over the shadows of the tomb. Over all there brooded one overwhelming idea, which once admitted, she could not shut out, that though she had lived an atheist's

life, there was indeed a God from whose presence and whose power she could not flee. The breathing silence of the night, its sweeping shadows, through which the stars were gleaming like the myriad eyes of omniscience, the lonely voice of the wind sighing through the trees, deepened the awe that oppressed her soul. Mrs. Milner rebuked her in the morning for her pale complexion, and insisted upon treating her as an invalid, and confining her to her room. By this means she hoped to keep her from the society of Clifton, whose influence she dreaded more than she was willing to acknowledge. She thought her, however, sufficiently recovered in the evening, to attend the party at Mrs. R.'s, for which splendid preparations had been long making. Catherine did not devote as much time as she was wont to do, in decorating her person, but her aunt supplied the deficiency, by over zeal on her part. She twisted and untwisted her hair, curled and uncurled it, waved and braided it, till Catherine declared her head ached and she would rather go as she was than be tortured any longer. She was beginning to think there was an *interior* to her head, which had been left to shameful neglect and poverty, while costly gems, and time, than gems more precious, had been constantly lavished on the *exterior*. Catherine received that evening a lesson she little expected, and it was not the less salutary. After playing and singing for the gratification of the company, and being complimented and admired as usual, she began to be weary. She felt a void unfelt before. She looked on the young men who surrounded her, and thought how they sunk into

insignificance, even in personal comparison with Clifton, to say nothing of his lofty intellect, his pure and spiritual conversation. Every thing that was said to her sounded silly and vapid. She wanted to be alone, and taking advantage of a moment, when a new singer was engaging general attention, she retired into the piazza, where the beauty of the night had already attracted many of the guests. She stood a moment in the shade without being perceived, quite near a young gentleman and lady who were engaged in earnest conversation. She had no intention of acting the part of a listener, but hearing her own name, she involuntarily held her breath that she might not lose the accompanying words. The gentleman was one of her professed admirers, the young lady one of her warmest professing friends.

"You have been saying all these fine things before to Catherine Meredith," said the young lady; "you are the professed worshipper of her beauty. Why attempt to lay offerings at a meaner shrine?"

"Catherine Meredith," repeated he, emphatically; "why it is the fashion to admire *her*, and her vanity is so excessive and so exacting, it is impossible for a young man to be in her presence, without being forced to pay tribute to it. And then her vain, foolish aunt, taxing every one's admiration for Catherine, and compelling them to declare her a super-angelic being!"

"But surely you think her handsome?" asked the young girl, in a delighted voice. "I never thought her so myself, but feared to confess it, lest I should be accused of envy."

"Yes, rather handsome," was the reply, "but nothing to excite interest. She reminds me of Moore's description of that beauty unchangeably bright which annihilates love, with its own dazzling excess.—Oh! no.—I flatter her, it is true, for it amuses me, but neither she, nor fifty thousand such as she, could ever touch my heart."

Here something was added in a lower voice, something probably meant for her exclusive ear, and they passed on into the moonlight, leaving Catherine first petrified with astonishment, and then glowing with indignation.

"Are these," thought she, "the friends in whose sincerity I have confided, to whose professions I have lent a charmed and willing ear?"

Bitter was the pang to find herself an object of ridicule and contempt, where she believed she was almost worshipped. Unused to self-control, and too proud to suffer her feelings to be visible to those who would triumph in her mortification, she complained of a violent headache to her aunt, and induced her to return home. The same young man pressed forward to assist her into the carriage, with that devoted admiring air he always assumed, but Catherine, giving him an inexplicable look, coldly declined the offered civility, to the great astonishment and displeasure of her aunt.

"You are very strange to-night, Catherine," said Mrs. Milner. "I thought Mr. — was a great favourite of yours."

"I hate him, I detest him," cried she. "I never wish to hear his name mentioned in my presence."

Her long-repressed feelings here burst forth, and throwing herself back in the carriage, she wept the bitterest tears she had ever shed in her life. Wounded pride, mortified vanity, envy, jealousy, and anger, raged like a whirlwind in her bosom. It was long before she would explain to her aunt the cause of her mysterious agitation, and when she did so, the violence of Mrs. Milner's indignation swept away Catherine's in its stronger current. She exhausted herself in giving vent to her anger, and retired to her room in a state bordering on hysterics. As Catherine crossed the gallery that led to her chamber, the servant who lighted her, begged her to stop and speak to a little girl, who seemed in great distress about her mother, and had been there once before, during their absence. She had just made an appeal in her behalf to Mrs. Milner, but in vain—she was too much engrossed with her own imagined wrongs. Catherine was precisely in that state of mind when she was rejoiced to be carried away from herself. She turned to the child, and bade her make known her wants. The little girl came forward, trembling and weeping, and in a few simple words declared her errand. Her mother was poor, very poor, who lived in a little alley not far distant. She supported herself by her daily labour, and two or three little children, whom she left at home during the day, and to whom she returned at night, with the wages she had earned. This night she had returned very ill and laid down

in her bed, without speaking. The eldest of the little girls, whose name was Nelly, ran over to beg one of the servants of Mrs. Milner to come to her mother's assistance, for she was afraid she was going to die. "There was a good gentleman here," said Nelly, "who told me he would send her a doctor, but I am afraid to be left with mother, and brother and sister are *littleer* than I."

Catherine thought there was but one good gentleman in the world, and that was Clifton. The tears of the little girl affected her surprisingly. "It is but a few steps," said she, "and the moon is shining brightly, I will go with you myself, and see what can be done for your mother."

Then telling Nelly to lead the way, she bade the astonished waiting-maid follow, and set out, for the first time in her life, for the abode of poverty, sickness, and perhaps of death. With nothing but a light scarf thrown over her splendid dress, she glided through the alternate shadows and moonbeams, by the side of the miserable child, like one of those bright genii, described in oriental tales. She was hardly conscious of the impulse that led her on. She was greatly excited, and having read one lesson of the world's vanity, she felt a feverish desire to peruse another, in a far different scene. It was not till she reached the door of the low, wretched dwelling, she was sensible of the extraordinary situation in which she had placed herself. Nelly softly lifted the latch, and held the door for Catherine to pass in, with that courtesy which nature sometimes teaches the humblest

of its children. Catherine paused upon the threshold, for she felt that she was treading on holy ground. A voice, too, reached her ear, whose tones breathed of the tranquillity of heaven. A single lamp, placed on a low table near the bed, dimly lighted up the apartment, and revealed to the appalled view of Catherine, the livid countenance of the apparently dying woman. She lay extended on a straw pallet, rigid and motionless, with no symptoms of life about her, but an occasional wild rolling of the eyes, which were of a livid black, and contrasted fearfully with her ashy complexion. Two little, pale, terrified-looking children crouched near the foot of the bed, and kneeling by its side, was a figure which Catherine thought she would have recognised in the most distant isle of the ocean. It was Clifton, who, like his divine Master, made it his business to go about, binding up the wounds of sorrow and sin, and soothing the evils of suffering humanity. He had sent a physician, who had but just left the cabin, but he came himself, to see if he could not minister comfort and give counsel to the soul of the invalid. He found her in that condition, when it is impossible for man to tell what is passing between the spirit and the mighty God into whose presence it is about to appear, and kneeling down, he commended her to Him in whose sight the dweller of the mud-walled cottage and the inmate of the palace are equal.

Catherine held her breath, as that solemn, fervent, thrilling prayer rose like incense above the couch of death. He was not aware of her presence. He re-

membered only the presence of the omnipotent Jehovah, and the poor sufferer, for whom he was interceding, and by this simple, yet sublime act of faith and devotion he transformed that miserable apartment into a scene of grandeur and of glory. When Clifton rose from his knees, Nelly, who had stood in mute awe by the side of Catherine, approached her mother, and took hold of the hand, which was no longer conscious of her touch. Catherine followed, trembling and bewildered, and encountered the wondering gaze of Clifton, who turned round at the footsteps of the child. The lamp flashed up at this moment, and reflected its rays full on Catherine's glittering figure, so strangely contrasting with the poverty and gloom of the place. The dying woman seemed to be roused by the gleam, and opening her eyes once more, fixed them upon Catherine with such a wild, unearthly glare, she could scarcely repress the scream of terror that rose to her lips.

Clifton drew near Catherine. "You had better return," said he; "you cannot relieve her, for she is beyond all human aid. Take these poor orphans with you, and give them shelter for the night. Let your attendant remain here. I will see you safely home, and then return, and keep watch with her while life lasts."

"Can I do nothing to assist you?" asked Catherine, ashamed of her helplessness and her fears.

"There is nothing to be done," replied he, "but I rejoice that you have been led here for your own sake. This scene needs no comments. It is awful, but chastening."

Here a deep groan from the bed made Catherine start and shudder, and Clifton pitying her agitation, took her hand and drew her gently away. The children sobbed and clung to the bedside of their mother, refusing to leave her, and Clifton thinking it kinder to indulge their feelings than to force them, suffered them to remain behind. When they came into the open air, and saw the pure and blessed moon shining above, Catherine felt as if she were emerging into more celestial regions than she had ever inhabited before. A sixth sense seemed to have been imparted to her, whereby the glory of God was revealed to her soul. The heavens no longer appeared to her a mere expanse of starry blue, made to gratify man's nightly vision, or to exercise the genius of the astronomer, but a tablet on which was impressed in burning and eternal characters, the wisdom, the power, the infinity of the creating uncreated hand. The shadows of death were left rolling behind, forming a dark background for these living splendours. The consciousness that she had something existing within her, destined to live when the moon, and the stars, and the heavens themselves were no more, swelled in her bosom, and oppressed while it exalted her. When Clifton parted with her at her own door, he simply said, "May God bless you, Miss Meredith." The words were few, but every thing that was kind and feeling was expressed in the deep and heartfelt sincerity of the tones. Catherine could not sleep, through the long watches of the night. How much had she learned during the past hours of the treachery,

the falsehood, the vanity of the world! She reflected with shame and remorse on the stormy passions that had been excited in her breast. They had all subsided in the chill, still atmosphere of death. The beauty which she had lived to adorn and display seemed now worthless in her eyes, doomed as it was to turn to dust and ashes, while the deathless principle which had been slumbering under the influence of such fatal opiates, now awakened and rose upon the ruins of demolished vanity and pride, with supernatural energy.

The woman died a few hours after Catherine left her. Her first thought when she heard the intelligence was for the destitute orphans. She knew they had a friend in Clifton, but she wanted to aid him in this labour of love. Her only difficulty was in breaking the matter to her aunt, and in gaining her consent and co-operation. Frank unfortunately was absent, who would have assisted her in this extremity, and though with some misgivings, she entered upon her explanation. Mrs. Milner was aghast with horror, when she learned that Catherine herself had breathed infected air, had stood by the bed of death, and perhaps exposed herself and the family to some loathsome disease. She called for camphor, lavender, and cologne, and insisted upon Catherine's bathing herself in the odorous waters, as many times as the proud leper was commanded to wash in the waves of Jordan. The children—she would not hear of them. They might bring distemper with them; there was an orphan asylum in which they could be placed. She was

going to make immediate preparations to leave the town, and visit some watering place, where they would be secure from contagion. Baffled in her benevolent wishes, Catherine entreated Clifton to find a home for the orphans, on the condition that she should be allowed to defray all expenses connected with the charge. This Clifton did not resist, for he knew it would flow back in blessings on herself.

A pious and respectable widow consented to receive them, and Catherine never forgot her protégés. Mrs. Milner's alarm did not subside, and another motive, unavowed, induced her to hasten her departure, her anxiety to remove Catherine from the influence of Clifton. Her anger, too, at the occurrence which took place at the party, accelerated her movements. Catherine saw with dismay the arrangements for their speedy removal from the society of one, whom she now regarded as her best counsellor, and truest friend. Frank openly resisted the plan, but finding it in vain to alter his aunt's determination, he urged Clifton to accompany them, with all the eloquence of which he was master. "I cannot go with you," replied he; here Mrs. Milner breathed freely, "but I will endeavour to follow," here her brow again clouded, while Catherine's brightened as if a sunbeam flashed over it. They were to commence their journey early in the morning—Clifton lingered till a late hour in the evening. He spoke to Catherine with all the freedom and tenderness of a brother, and at her own request sketched the outline of his sainted sister's character and life, for Catherine resolved in her heart she

would make them the model of her own. She no longer thought it a gloomy theme—she could even hear him speak of death without shuddering, for she began to perceive beyond its shadows, the dawn of an eternal day.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Mrs. Milner, as the carriage rolled away from the door, and the last glimpse of Clifton's figure was excluded from their view.

"For what?" asked Frank, abruptly.

"For being relieved of the company of that young man. He has changed you and Catherine into perfect mopes, and me, too, almost—I really have not felt well since he came among us."

Catherine either could not or would not speak. She sat veiled in a corner of the carriage, and turned not at the voice of her aunt. Not so Frank—he could not hear Clifton lightly named.

"Aunt," said he, warmly, "there is more real worth in one joint of Clifton's little finger, than in all the young men you ever knew in your whole existence. He is truth to his heart's core. He would sacrifice his life for his enemy—more he could not do for a friend. Mopes! I never knew one hour of real happiness till I knew him, nor Catherine either, I am confident, though she may not be bold enough to declare it."

"Well, Frank," replied she, angrily, "I will not say more now, as you are so warm, but I never wish to see him again as long as I live."

"Perhaps not, my dear aunt, but when you come

to die, you may wish in vain for such a friend as Clifton."

Mrs. Milner looked as if she thought that hour was far distant; but in such an hour as we think not, "the Son of Man cometh." She awoke that night with a violent pain in her head, and a burning thirst, accompanied by indescribable and alarming sensations. She had fled precipitately from disease, but it pursued her like a strong man armed, and she now lay powerless in its grasp. As a traveller she was deprived of the comforts of home, and was compelled to employ as a physician, a stranger, in whose skill she had no confidence. Catherine was terrified. She had never seen her aunt sick in her life. She had lived as if she expected immortality on earth. It was a melancholy thing to see her prostrated so suddenly on a sick bed. She insisted upon going home immediately. She would be well as soon as she returned, she was sure, but the moment she lifted her head from the pillow, her brain reeled and her limbs refused their office. In a few hours she was raving in delirium, and the physician declared her life in the utmost danger. Messengers were dispatched for her medical friends, but before they arrived, she was on the verge of eternity, and no human hand could hold her back from the awful abyss in which she was about to plunge. It was a fearful thing to hear her raving about fashion and fine dresses, and Catherine's beauty, thus weaving of vanity a winding-sheet for her soul, the grave-clothes which it must wear into the presence of a holy God.

"Oh!" exclaimed Catherine, as she hung in agony over her bed, "oh, that Clifton were here, that he might breathe one such prayer over her as I heard him breathe over that poor, dying woman!"

"My sister," said Frank, "let us kneel together, and pray that Clifton's God may be ours. The voice of prayer cannot reach her ear, but it will be heard by Him whose mercy is equal to his power."

It was a touching sight to see that brother and sister kneeling by the dying bed of her who had never instilled into their young hearts one principle of religion, who had dedicated them to the God of this world, totally regardless of another, and who had never lifted one prayer for herself or them, but had risen up and laid down like the beasts that perish, to eat, to drink, to sleep, and then to die.

Mrs. Milner died. No ray of reason broke in on her departing soul—no consolation remained for her weeping friends. The last words she uttered rung in Catherine's ear, long after her body was mouldering in the grave. "Take it back," said she, after having given directions for a new dress in the latest style, "take it back, it is old-fashioned, and stiff. It does not fit me. The chamber is narrow, and the robe must be tight. The folds must lay close and smooth, and take care the dust does not soil it. It looks wondrous white." White indeed was the last robe she wore, and the folds once laid, they never moved again.

To avoid details too minute for the limits of a story like this, we will pass over the interval of a



year, and introduce Catherine Meredith once more to our readers in her own home, which was to be her home no longer. Owing to the boundless extravagance of Mrs. Milner, who proved so faithless a guardian to the trust imposed, Catherine's fortune was completely exhausted, and Frank found when he had cancelled every debt, he had scarcely enough left for a support. The splendid house of their father was given up, and they were about to remove to a small cottage in the country, where Frank intended to prepare himself for the ministry, and Catherine to engage in the instruction of youth. Catherine sat alone in the spacious apartment, which had been so often thronged with gay and flattering guests. She was dressed in simple mourning, and her hair parted on her brow, without ringlets or ornaments. Her cheek was pale, and her eye more thoughtful than in her days of vanity, but "that peace which passeth all understanding" now beamed from her countenance, and pervaded her heart. True, she felt some natural regrets at leaving the home of her childhood, where every object was endeared to her juvenile memory. She sat down to the piano, and touched the keys for the last time. She began a hymn that Clifton had taught her, but overcome by her feelings, she paused, and leaning her face on the instrument, tears fell thick and fast upon the keys, which had so many times responded to her flying fingers. The door opened, but she did not raise her head. She thought she knew her brother's footsteps. Some one sat down by her side, but still she moved not, for assured of

Frank's affectionate sympathy, she was not ashamed of her emotion. Her hand was gently taken, and she withdrew it not, believing it the same fraternal hand which had always soothed her sorrows, and wiped away her tears. "Catherine," said a voice, as kind and tender, but far different from Frank's. It was Clifton, the brother of her adoption, and from this moment, the destiny of Catherine was changed. She was told that she was loved by one whom she revered as the best and holiest of created beings, as her guide to heaven, her counsellor and consoler on earth. Catherine, in the true humility of her heart, believed herself unworthy of his love, but she doubted not his sincerity, and she lifted up her heart in gratitude to heaven for having provided her with a friend so dear. Clifton had not stood aloof from them, during the year which had flown by. Many a time previous to this hour, his heart had yearned to pour forth the tenderness that filled it to overflowing, but he feared the change in Catherine's character might be rather the result of feeling than principle, and that she might relapse again into her former habits of self-indulgence and folly. Now, however, when he saw her continuing in the narrow path of duty with undeviating steps, unmoved by the ridicule of her former associates, preparing herself for a life of exertion and self-denial, with more than resignation, with energy and cheerfulness; he felt that he could take her by the hand, and bind her to his heart with indissoluble ties—ties which death could not sever, and eternity would more closely unite.

"Did you know that Catherine Meredith was married this morning to that methodistical young man?" asked one of Catherine's former associates of another. "I always thought it would be a match, for the poor girl almost run crazy after him."

"Well, I wish her joy," answered the other. "I am sure no one envies her. They say he is very poor and exceedingly penurious. I know well enough she will get tired of her conventicle life—such a proud, vain flirt as she used to be, is not changed so soon. It is all hypocrisy. She put on religion, as she would put on a new dress, to catch her husband, and she will put it off as readily, when it suits her convenience."

"And what do you think," observed the first speaker, "of her handsome brother Frank? They say he is going to turn a preacher since he has lost his property. Poor Mrs. Milner little thought, when she died, of such a downfall to her hopes. I believe she thought Catherine might have married any prince in Europe. She was an excellent woman, after all—gave such elegant parties;—she was a great loss to society."

So the heartless world spoke of the future prospects of those who had withdrawn from its unhallowed influence. Let us follow Catherine for one moment to her new home, and see whether she is wedded to penury and avarice. The last light of day, that softened yet glowing light, which allows the eye to dwell undazzled on the loveliness of nature, was lingering on the landscape. The richness and maturity of latent

summer mellowed the tints, but no trace of autumnal decay yet marked the magnificent garniture of the fields and bowers. The bridal travellers were ascending a gradual slope, from which the prospect every moment expanded into deeper loveliness, when Catherine's eye was attracted by a white mansion, gleaming through overshadowing trees, in classic beauty and simplicity, situated remote from the road, and surrounded by an expanse of living green.

"Whose beautiful dwelling-place is that?" said Catherine.

"Let us pause a moment on the brow of this hill, that we may observe more leisurely this enchanting view." Clifton ordered the carriage to stop, and Catherine gazed with delighted eye around her. "The owner of that mansion, my beloved Catherine," said Clifton, while he followed with his own her beaming glances, "is a most blessed and happy man. Heaven has endowed him with wealth, and also inspired him with a desire to make the gift subservient to his Creator's glory. His heart overflows with love to his fellow-men, yet he felt alone in the world, for, in common with other men, he was called to weep over the graves of his kindred. He sighed for a bosom on which he could repose his cares and his trust. He sought it not among the daughters of fashion, and yet he found it. He is now in possession of a wife most lovely to his sight, but far more lovely to his soul;—a meek, devoted, Christian wife, who, having loved him for himself alone, unconscious of his wealth, now comes to share it, and help him to

distribute it among the children of sorrow and of want." Catherine threw herself into her husband's arms and wept, but they were tears of gratitude and joy; not for the affluence that was again to be her portion, but that she was the wife of Clifton—deemed worthy to be his handmaid and partner on earth, and destined, she humbly believed, to be his companion hereafter, in that world "where there shall be no more marrying or giving in marriage, but where all shall be like the angels of God in heaven."

## Mary Hawthorne.

"MARY HAWTHORNE, why don't you come into the drawing-room? There is not a *very* large company, so you need not be frightened away to-night."

"Perhaps not; but I had rather pass the evening in your father's chamber. He will be alone, and will welcome me, I know; and in the drawing-room, I should be a mere cipher to others, while I would myself suffer the tortures which none but bashful people can know."

"Well, if you persist in your old-fashioned ways, I suppose I must let you follow them; I acknowledge there is nothing particularly attractive as yet in the assembly, so let us walk awhile on this green plat, and make our observations, through these lighted windows, on the figures so gaily dressed."

The speaker, a fashionable-looking, gaily-dressed young man, led his companion along, as he spoke, to the spot indicated; and as they slowly promenaded in the shade, he criticised with a practised eye the dress, air, and attitudes of the group within, illuminated as it was by the shower of silver light that fell from the brilliant chandeliers. There could not be a greater contrast in appearance, than between the young man and his companion. Her apparel was remarkable in such a scene, from its extreme simplicity; and there was no glow of beauty on her face, or striking graces of person, to render the absence of all adventitious

ornament forgotten by the beholder. She was not beautiful; she was not handsome; not even what the world calls pretty, and yet she is the heroine of my story—and Henry Graham, the hero, was called the handsomest man in his mother's drawing-room, when the elite of the city were gathered there, as they were often wont to be.

"Had you not better go in?" said Mary, as she observed the stately figure of Mrs. Graham pass and re-pass the windows, pausing to say a few words to this guest, bowing graciously to that, smiling benignantly on one, offering a fan to another, the embodied spirit of politeness, ever moving, yet ever seeming exactly in the right spot.

"Not yet; stay awhile longer—there is no one there I care any thing about; and you know I never trouble myself to entertain those who are indifferent to me. It is incredible to me how my mother (Heaven forgive her!) can condescend to put on that eternal smile, and to appear so delighted with people whom in her heart she despises, laughs at, or dislikes. I must say, however, her smiles become her very much; she is a noble-looking woman, and understands the art of dressing better than any lady I know—I wish you would take lessons of her, Mary."

"When I am as handsome as your mother, I will certainly do it. Let excessive attention to dress be the peculiar privilege of beauty: *I* claim the less appropriated one of unadorned homeliness."

"You do injustice to yourself—you look very

well, Mary, vastly better than a hundred prettier girls. If you would summon a little more confidence, and assume an air, a manner—that something, whose fascination we feel, yet cannot describe: dress with a little more taste and fashion, you would find that nature has not been such a niggard after all. You would be astonished yourself at the metamorphosis."

"It must have been far easier to transform Daphne into a laurel tree, and Narcissus into a flower, than an awkward girl like me, into a modern fine lady. Oh, Henry!" she continued, in a tone of deep feeling, "if you knew what I suffer when I am in the midst of a scene like the one reflected before us, you would never ask me to enter upon it. When I see so many fair forms, and so many admiring eyes bent upon them, I cannot but make comparisons humbling to myself; and sometimes I feel as if I would barter an empire, if I had it, for *such* claims to honour: ay, 'tis true, I grow envious; and then I hate myself."

"Strange girl! With such a soul——" he was going on, probably, to exalt the perfections of the soul in comparison with those of the body, when his attention became suddenly and completely distracted; his eye rested on a lady, who, at that moment, entered the drawing-room, and hastily saying, "I believe it is time I should be there," Mary found herself alone beneath the mulberry tree, under which they had just been standing. The most laboured eloquence could not have convinced her more of the justice of her own reflections with regard to personal beauty, than this simple act. The lady whom Henry so eagerly

sought, was beautiful—splendidly, surpassingly beautiful: not from mere regularity of feature, and brilliancy of complexion, but there was an air of regality about her, a queenly grace, such as Mary's imagination had invested her lovely namesake of the house of Stuart with. She was dressed magnificently; but the jewelry of her eyes transcended the gems that glittered on her neck and arms; and even the diamond star, that shone midst the darkness of her hair, flashed not more brightly than the glances she scattered like sun-rays around her. Wherever she moved there was a buzz, a commotion, a pressing forward of the gentlemen—a subsiding motion among the ladies. But who could marvel? She moved with such grace! Mary caught herself repeating, before she was aware of the recollection,

“The cygnet nobly walks the water—  
So moves on earth Circassia's daughter.”

Wherever the fair stranger turned, Henry Graham followed her, with an animation of countenance and earnestness of manner, strikingly contrasted with the languor and indifference he generally manifested, when he felt no motive to call into exercise those powers of pleasing with which he was eminently endowed. Mary sighed; she was vexed with herself for sighing—she feared she was growing very envious.

“I would rather die,” said she to herself, “than give myself up to the dominion of such a hateful passion. Conscious as I am of having that within which should lift me above such grovelling thoughts

—a heart glowing with the love of all that's excellent and fair—a soul capable of bearing me to the very gates of the empyrean——”

She remembered, then, her office as nurse, in the chamber of the invalid master of the gay mansion, and quitting her post of observation, she passed the illuminated hall, and softly unclosed the door of an apartment, where she knew her light footstep was always welcomed with joy.

“Mary, my dear, is it you?” asked a mild voice, as she entered. She answered by smoothing the pillow on which the invalid leaned in his easy chair, and placing his footstool in a more comfortable position. What a change did this silent chamber present from the hall into which she had just been gazing! The dim lamps that burned upon the table, the close-drawn curtains shutting out the soft breath of evening, the white locks and wan face that reclined upon the pillow—called up a very different train of reflections from the dazzling lights, the crimson folds drawn back by gilded shafts, the proud mien and flushed cheek of Mrs. Graham, or the gaiety and splendour of her guests. She thought of her mother's sick room and dying hour, her own deserted home, and, drawing a low chair near Mr. Graham, she sat down in silence, for her heart was too full for speech.

And who is Mary Hawthorne? What relation does she bear to the family of the Grahams? And where did she acquire those rustic, retiring habits, so ungenial with her present situation? may be questions naturally asked and easily answered.

Mary's mother was cousin to Mrs. Graham, and in early youth had been her play-fellow, school-mate, and most familiar friend. An imprudent marriage, whose result was a blighting of the heart, poverty, and seclusion from the world, removed her entirely from Mrs. Graham's prosperous and brilliant sphere. Left in widowhood with scarcely the means of support, yet too proud to ask assistance from the early friends, whose neglect and alienation she bitterly felt, she continued to struggle with her destiny, and to bear up herself and her young daughter above the cold waters of despair that seemed fast closing around her, till, finding herself sick and dying, she sent a messenger to the once affectionate friend of her youth, and entreated her with all the eloquence of a dying mother's prayer, to receive and cherish her desolate child.

Mrs. Graham's good feelings were not so utterly worn out in the pursuit of the world's pleasures, as to be unaffected by a petition like this. She promised all that was asked; and Mrs. Hawthorne's last sigh was mingled with a throb of deep thanksgiving. Mary, the humble, disciplined child of adversity and sorrow, became a dependent on the bounty of one who, from her cradle, had been dandled in the lap of smiling prosperity, and knew adversity and sorrow only by name. Accustomed to the unbounded indulgence of her own passions, Mrs. Graham never reflected, that others might have passions and feelings too. Consideration made no part of her character. When she granted Mrs. Hawthorne's petition, she had flattered

herself that her orphan protege would give her additional eclat in society; she had delineated her in her own imagination, with the classic outline of her mother's beautiful face—a fair, drooping lily, gemmed with the dews of sorrow, that would contrast sweetly with the roses of beauty she gathered into her drawing-room. Her disappointment at seeing Mary was extreme, and she had not the delicacy or kindness to conceal it. The weeds of mourning and the pallor of deep grief, had a most unfavourable effect on Mary's naturally pale complexion and downcast eyes; while awed by the unwonted splendour that surrounded her, she exhibited an embarrassment of manner, which, to the self-possessed and graceful Mrs. Graham, had the character of incurable awkwardness.

"What a pity she's not prettier!" said she to a female friend, in a low voice, but which Mary, accustomed to watch for the feeble accents of her mother, distinctly heard; "I cannot conceive how it happens; her mother was one of the most beautiful women I ever saw; I am shockingly disappointed; she seems excessively awkward, too, poor thing!"

Cold and heavy as lead did each unfeeling word sink in poor Mary's woe-worn heart. Convicted of the atrocious crime of not being handsome, she had an intuitive perception, that the qualities of the head and heart, which, amidst all the ills of life, her mother had constantly taught her to cultivate, would be considered as of little value in the estimation of Mrs. Graham. All the warm feelings of gratitude and love, which she was ready to pour out at the feet of her benefac-

tress, were congealed at the fountain. She sickened in the midst of profusion, and would gladly have laid herself in her mother's grave and died, if she could have escaped the chagrin and isolation of her present lot. To have nobody to love her, nobody to love in return, it was a living death, a frozen life; she could not endure it. At last she found an object on whom she could lavish her sympathy, her affections, and her cares. She had been for some time a member of the household before she knew there was such a being in the world as Mr. Graham. There was such a constant bustle about the house, such an ebbing and flowing of the tide of fashionable life, she was perfectly bewildered; her faculties of seeing and hearing seemed to have become dim and weakened; she felt a mere speck herself, a mote in the sunbeam, whose oppressive glare withered up her young heart.

One evening, she never forgot it, when sitting sad and unnoticed in a corner of the room, Henry Graham, who, though the flattered votary of fashion, was gifted by nature with warm and generous feelings, took compassion on the forlornness of her situation, and asked her to walk in the garden and help him to gather some flowers for his father. His father! it was the first time she had heard his name. She then learned from him, that Mr. Graham had been long confined to his room, by a chronic disease, which, though not attended with any immediate danger, was a source of frequent suffering, and excluded him from all the active pleasures of existence.

"Oh, let me go to him," exclaimed Mary; "let

me stay with him and nurse him; I am too dull, too sad, to be where I am; will you not take me to him?"

Henry was moved by the earnestness of her manner; it was the first time he had heard distinctly the sound of her voice, or seen the colour of her eyes; for, dismayed by the remarks of Mrs. Graham on her personal appearance, she had remained perfectly silent from that moment in company, unless directly addressed, with drooping lids, that too often covered tears, that would but dared not fall. She now spoke with fervour, and her voice, though low, had an uncommon sweetness of tone; and her mild, sad gray eye lighted up with an expression which not only indicated exalted feeling, but intellectual power. Henry, though he had made his best endeavours to bring down his mind to the level of coxcombry, and to form himself after the most admired models of fashion, had not been quite able to do it. The celestial spark would occasionally flash out. He had looked upon Mary as a kind of automaton, a poor girl whom it was his mother's business to feed and clothe, and, as such, entitled to kindness on his part. He now saw that she was a feeling, thinking being, and Mary understood, with surprise and delight, she might look for sympathy where she had least expected it. He walked with her through the garden, pointing out to her observation what he thought most worthy of admiration, conducted her kindly to his father's chamber, was very sorry he had not time to remain himself, and left her, happier than she had been since she was an orphan.



She was surprised when she saw an aged man, with snowy hair, reclining on a couch, by the side of which Henry had seated her. Mrs. Graham, in full dress, might have passed for the elder sister of her son, and could not have numbered half the years of her husband. "This must be Henry's grand-sire," thought she, "and yet he called him father." She was mistaken—it was Mr. Graham, the neglected husband of his younger, gayer wife, breathing out his unvalued existence, uncheered by those soothing attentions, those offices of love, which can transform the couch of sickness into a bed of roses. Yet many a poor cabin dweller doubtless envied him his damask canopy, downy pillows, and numerous attendants, nor dreamed that the inmate of such an apartment could sigh from the consciousness of neglect. He must have been a very exacting man, for Mrs. Graham came into the room almost every day, to inquire after his health, which was very kind, as he had been sick so long, it would have been natural not to think of him at all; and Henry, who certainly loved his father, often devoted an hour at a time to read to him or converse with him. He would gladly have done more to prove his filial devotion, but then, as he himself had told Mary, he had so little time. He was obliged to attend his mother to so many parties, to see so much company at home, to go to the theatre and the ball-room so often, he was so much admired and caressed, and he was so unaffectedly and constitutionally indolent, it was surprising how he was able to accomplish so

much. From the hour Mary first stood by his side, and offered, with a trembling hand, the flowers she had gathered in the evening, whose commencement we have just described, during the lapse of a year, she had been to him a ministering spirit of kindness and love. She became as light to his eyes and fragrance to his senses. The face which was disregarded or criticised by the side of the heartless belle, was welcomed by him as an angel visitor. She came to him arrayed in the beauty of gentle words and deeds, and his chilled bosom melted with tenderness, and warmed towards her with more than a father's love. Nor did she confine herself to mere physical attentions. She administered to his mind the food it loved, read to him hour after hour, till lulled by her voice, he slumbered quietly as a soothed infant. Mary grew happy in the consciousness of being loved, of being necessary to the happiness of another. She had another source of happiness in the society of Henry, who found a relief from ennui in her natural and unpretending conversation, exalted, as it oftentimes was, by beauty of imagination and vigour of thought. When weary of playing the part of a fine gentleman, weary of shining and being shone upon, or of lounging on a sofa, or sauntering through the hall, he thought of Mary, and found himself refreshed and invigorated in her presence. The best, the kindest of feelings of his nature were called into exercise by this companionship, for Mary never touched a chord of the human heart that did not answer in sweet music, provided that the heart were rightly tuned.

He learned to look upon her with the kindness and consideration of a brother, and sought to draw her more into society, but here his efforts were generally unavailing.

"Mary, my child, do not stay with me to-night," said Mr. Graham, laying his hand on her head, as she drew a low seat close to him, and leaned on the elbow of his chair—"you make yourself too much of a nun; I am a selfish old man, I know, but I cannot bear to see you deprive yourself of every gratification at your age."

"I find my chief pleasure here; I cannot even claim the merit of making a sacrifice, for if I did not remain with you, I should most probably retire to my own room."

"I have a great deal to say to you, Mary, but I cannot do it to-night; I feel too languid for the effort; another time when I can rally a little more strength, remember what I have said: I must not defer it too long, for my life is gliding away, grain after grain; a few more turnings of the glass and it will all be over. Does it make you weep, child, to hear me speak thus? Well, take down that book and read me to sleep, for my eyes are heavy, and it is better that I should not talk now."

Mary took the book, and began to read in those low, gentle tones, so soothing to a sick man's ear. It was not long before his deepened breathing convinced her that her voice was no longer heard. She paused awhile, and turning over the pages, tried to continue reading to herself, but though it was an author she

loved, she could not fasten her attention upon a single paragraph. Her eyes ran over the lines, and mechanically took in the words, but her thoughts wandered after the dazzling stranger. Her curiosity was excited—she wondered at its own intensity. She longed for the morning, that she might ask Henry her name and residence. She laid down her book, and sat in the window, within the curtain, where she could see and hear something of the movements in the hall; for Mr. Graham's room was in a wing of the building, extending back from the main body of the house. The sash was a little raised, and she could distinctly hear the notes of the piano, with the accompaniment of a female voice of rare and exquisite melody. "That must be the beautiful stranger," and she was right in her conclusion. It was Miss Devereux, the star of the evening, the acknowledged beauty of a sister city, a nightingale in song, a goddess in the dance, a perfect mirror of the graces. Female rivalry was put aside in her presence, for she distanced all competition. It was no disgrace to yield the palm to one so pre-eminent; it became a matter of policy to praise and admire her, and for once, the ladies vied with the other sex, in their flatteries and attentions. She had the peculiar power of conversing with half a dozen gentlemen at the same time, and to make each believe that they were particularly distinguished. She would keep a dozen more employed for her at the same time, and each considered himself particularly honoured. No empress was more despotic in her sway, yet she threw her chains around her vassals

so gracefully, that they gloried in their bondage. If Mary was so anxious to hear her name, she had but to listen at the door of the drawing-room, where it resounded from corner to corner the whole evening. It was "Miss Devereux's glove," "Miss Devereux's fan," "Miss Devereux's this," and "Miss Devereux's that," nothing in the world but Miss Devereux. It was strange how one woman could turn so many people's heads in one night, but she was the *veni, vidi, vici* lady. It would be difficult to count the tongues employed the next morning in discussing the merits of her person, voice, dress, and manners. It is strange indeed, if no flaw were discovered in the jewel, upon an inspection so close; perhaps the microscopic eye of envy might have done so; but Henry Graham made no such discovery. Mary found him as ready to tell her all he knew respecting her, as she was eager to ask. He described her as not only the most beautiful being he ever beheld, but the most fascinating; he could find no language sufficiently strong to do justice to her; he was obliged to speak in ejaculatory sentences:—"How superbly she dances," "how divinely she sings," "such eyes," "such a brow," "such a glorious complexion!" It is unnecessary to repeat all the encomiums that were uttered, or all that Mrs. Graham and her son said respecting the evening's party or the morning's entertainment. The former was delighted, because it had gone off so brilliantly, and the latter that he had been roused and exalted into interest, and that the demon of ennui was charmed away, for that day at least. And so it

was for many days—for weeks. There was a constant succession of parties, rides, excursions of pleasure, and every fashionable pastime for the beautiful stranger. Henry became fascinated and bewitched; he could talk of nothing else, till Mary, whose curiosity was completely satiated, would gladly have changed the theme. She was unwilling to manifest her weariness, lest Henry should mistake it for envy, and she sometimes feared it was so. Gradually, however, he spoke of her less and less, but from his long fits of abstraction, it was evident he thought the more; and Mary changing her fear, dreaded lest he should suffer himself to be lured by a syren to works that might wreck his peace. She knew but little of Miss Devereux, but she believed her heartless; she could not understand how any one could appreciate the affections of *one* who accepted with smiles, incense from all. Her fears were soon confirmed by one of those accidents which reveal more of the character in one moment, than is oftentimes done in years.

There was a long walk in Mrs. Graham's garden, shaded on each side by a close hedge, whither Mary was wont to retreat for solitude and exercise. One day, after enduring the martyrdom of a dinner party, which Mrs. Graham had given in honour of Miss Devereux, after feeling the presence of her beauty, till she seemed dazzled by its brilliance, and wishing most fervently that for Henry's sake, so superb a temple might have an indweller worthy of its fair proportions; she welcomed the moment which gave the ladies liberty to retire, and sought her favourite

shade. She always chose the least frequented side of the hedge, and was walking there, absorbed in thought, with her usual stilly step, when she heard voices on the other side, one of which immediately arrested her attention. It was that of Miss Devereux conversing with another young lady, probably a bosom friend.

"You are entirely mistaken," Miss Devereux was saying; "I care nothing about him, only as he administers to the gratification of the present moment; I may prefer him to any of the fools around me just now, because he is the handsomest, and reported to be the richest."

"Poor fellow," exclaimed her companion; "I always thought before you came, he was cased in a suit of mail, impenetrable to ladies' attractions; but indeed, Julia, you are wrong to encourage him so much if you really mean to discard him."

"Discard him! let him give me the opportunity; and be assured he shall—he will. I never suffer a man who has shown his devotion by exclusive attentions alone, trying to earn a right to an acceptance, and to make himself sure of it before he is committed, I never suffer such a man to escape: I lead him on till I bring him to my feet, and then suffer him to get up as he can."

"Supposing I undeceive him, and tell him what a deep coquette you are!"

"Do it—I defy you to do it! and I would stake my life on his incredulity. The chains are around him, the rivets are fastened, he cannot break them now:

would you know one of the great secrets of my power, Maria? They call me handsome: very well—perhaps I am so—but it is this; in giving just enough encouragement to inspire hope, and too little to create confidence."

"Very well; but if you ever mean to marry I cannot conceive why you would not accept him; he is handsome, rich, and fashionable."

"It is true, if I were foolish enough to think of falling in love, it would be a very good opportunity, but I love my independence and liberty too well; a few years hence will do; I would not for the autocrat of the Russias barter the freedom I now enjoy for domestic thralldom."

Mary, compelled to be a listener from her situation, was indignant and amazed. She could not have believed there was so much hollowness and art in the world. She felt as if she had been reading a dark page of the human heart, and in her simplicity and sincerity, looked upon Miss Devereux as little better than a murderess. What! entice a person with smiles and graces, and kind glances, to lay his whole affections at her feet, and then spurn them! Mary shuddered—she was but a novice in the ways of the world—and she shuddered still more when she heard the voice of Henry Graham accosting them, and the same silver tones which had just been pronouncing his doom, address him with such seductive softness.

"What, a rose! Mr. Graham offer me a rose! I thank you; but I dislike roses exceedingly."

"Dislike roses! impossible."

"Very possible; they are so vulgar, so glaring and large; I cannot imagine how it was ever named the queen of flowers."

"Unqueen her then, and suffer me to place the diadem on the one yourself shall call the fairest."

"Excuse me, no queen of flowers for me; they deserve not such honours; they are too fading, too abundant; there is vulgarity in their very profusion; they are a plebeian race, and I must acknowledge I dislike them all."

Henry spoke of a ride proposed for the morrow, and hoped the sky would be as blue and the air as pleasant, it was such a delightful excursion, the prospect was one of the finest in the world."

"Now, Mr. Graham, I sincerely think it one of the most foolish things in nature to go so far for a little amusement. I shall go, and I thank you for starting the idea, but how preposterous to ride so many miles over a dusty road and then climb a steep rugged hill, leaving shreds of muslin and lace on every shrub, just to admire a fine prospect and to have the blessed privilege of being weary!"

"If you do not wish to go, Miss Devereux," continued Henry, "the party will be broken up: we sought your pleasure particularly in the proposition; if I am not very much mistaken, yourself suggested the idea."

When the trio had again entered the house, Mary glided along her shaded path, which she could not do before without crossing theirs, and making them conscious of her previous vicinity, rejoicing for once that

she was not beautiful, if beauty must be accompanied with such heartless vanity and folly. Her mind was absorbed with one thought, Miss Devereux and the painful disclosure she was compelled to make to Henry Graham, for she deemed it a religious duty to inform him of the arts of which he was destined to be the victim. She found an early opportunity of being alone with him; she knew that they were to meet on the morrow, and she wished he should arm himself in time with the panoply of moral courage, to defy the arts of this insidious beauty.

"Henry," said she, approaching the sofa on which he reclined. She felt a sudden choking in her throat, and paused with the flush of embarrassment rising on her pale cheek.

"Well, what would you, Mary?" making room for her by his side. "What petition is harbingered by that earnest look?"

"None; I have no petition to make, merely simple facts to state, which I deem it my duty, however unpleasant."

"Do not hesitate; speak openly; am I not your brother? Address me as such."

"I hesitate because I fear to give pain; I fear too to be associated in your mind with painful emotions."

"What is it you have to communicate? Your eyes are filled with tears, you breathe with difficulty; is it any thing of Miss Devereux? Good heavens! Any accident? has the carriage been overturned? is she hurt? is she killed?" and Henry started upon his feet.

"Pray, compose yourself: it is of Miss Devereux I would speak, yet I am not aware of any accident. I have been an unwilling listener to-day to words you ought to hear, as they may, they must affect the happiness of your future life." Gathering courage from Henry's preposterous alarm, Mary faithfully repeated the cold, treacherous dialogue she had overheard. Henry listened without any interruption; she saw the blood mount higher and higher, till it reached his temples; he bit his nether lip most ominously: was he angry with her or Miss Devereux? she could not tell. At last he began to walk up and down the room with long tragic steps, stopping occasionally and applying his hand to his forehead with a force that made Mary start. She had never witnessed a lover's heroics, and was seriously alarmed. Hardly knowing what she did, she ran to him, and seizing him by the arm, arrested him in his rapid movements.

"Henry, dear Henry! what is the matter? Do not suffer yourself to be moved in this manner, try to forget her, she is not worthy you should give yourself such suffering on her account."

Henry shook her from him as if a viper had clung to him. Staggered by the violence of the motion, she was obliged to lean against the wall for support, and stung to the soul, she covered her face with her hands and burst into tears. He stopped, looked steadily at her and became very pale.

"Mary, beware what you are doing; it is dangerous to trifle with a man's passions when they are roused as mine are. I cannot believe her such a hypocrite;

deceit never was enshrined in such a form; were an angel to tell me that she did not love me, I would not believe it."

"You think me then capable of falsehood?"

"I think you have misunderstood and misinterpreted playful and innocent language. You know nothing of the world: what woman of spirit will acknowledge her affection for another, especially to a female friend? I would not wound your feelings, I may have been too hasty, you always act from a sense of right, but, Mary, you know but little of love."

Mary's tears were checked, the sense of deep injustice and ingratitude supplied her with dignity to bear her up above her wounded sensibility. Her mild eye lit up with a burning ray, her cheek glowed with living crimson, she seemed transformed; never before had her countenance beamed with such an expression; it imparted power and beauty to her face. Henry caught it, and it had upon him the momentary effect of fascination. Though the tide of exalted feeling soon rolled back, effacing for the time every impression but one, in after hours of darkness and despondency, the recollection of this flashing out of the heart and soul came to him as the torch, lighting up the gloom of a mine: Mary moved to the door and laid her hand upon the latch.

"My errand is done," said she; "how painful a one it has been, is useless for me to say. Had I known the manner in which it would be received, I might have lingered longer; but it is better as it is; I have done what truth and friendship required, and it is

enough. Grateful friendship, I ought to say, for when dejected, oppressed, and unappreciated by others, every fountain of joy sealed up, you came with sympathy and kindness on your lips and in your heart, and the living waters once more gladdened the desert of my life. From that hour gratitude to yourself and father have been a strong vital principle within me. Simple, inexperienced girl as I am, I know you better than the world does, and I have the boldness now to utter it: while the flatterers of your fortune deem you the mere indolent devotee of fashion, I have seen a depth of feeling and vigour of intellect that shamed the worldly bondage to which it submitted. That feeling and intellect will yet work out deliverance and triumph; you will hereafter do me justice."

Henry looked after her as she closed the door, as Amarath did upon the genius Syndaria when he had encircled her finger with the magic ring. He felt the power and purity of truth, and his conscience upbraided him for the ungracious manner in which he had met the admonition of his friend. Then again his imagination delineated the goddess form of Miss Devereux, the darkness of "her oriental eye" swam before his gaze: he thought of her houri smile, and convinced himself that she was all that was excellent as well as all that was fair; Mary's fastidious ideas of rectitude had been needlessly alarmed, and had converted a little badinage and evasion into moral turpitude. He attended the riding party the following day; Mrs. Graham was also there in high spirits; Mary remained, as usual, by the couch of Mr. Graham.

The house was almost deserted; the servants, as a reward for the many extra services required of them during such a succession of parties, were enjoying a holiday. Every room in the usually gay mansion was as still as the sick chamber where Mary kept her unwearied vigils.

"Mary, my dear," said the invalid—in a moment she was bending over him, "place these pillows behind me, and draw back that curtain, so that I may feel the west wind through the slats; I feel better than I have for many days, I can breathe more freely. Do you remember a promised communication you were to hear when I could summon sufficient strength and resolution? I dare not defer it longer; something warns me to finish all I have to do on earth, for I shall soon rest on a pillow where your kind hands, my Mary, can never reach me more. Give me a glass of that cordial and draw your chair still closer, and now let me begin before this glow has left my frame."

Mary had not forgotten what he had once said to her on this subject. Her curiosity had been excited and interested, but now the moment had arrived when it was to be gratified, she shrunk with awe and misgiving from the mysterious communication. She gazed with solemn interest on the aged speaker, whose sunken eyes were turned on her with a look of intense and prophetic meaning.

"Mary, if I had strength to relate to you the history of my life, you would wonder what strong passions had warred in this now wasted frame. I cannot



go back to my youth, I will not even revert to my prime of manhood; it was passed before I became a married man. When I tell you that never heart of mortal was more bound up in visions of home and domestic joy, that I centred in it all my affection, care, wealth, and happiness; when you see how my affection has been repaid, my cares returned, my wealth dissipated, my happiness disregarded—oh! my child, I am a dying old man, and ought to wrestle no longer with the dark spirits of this world, but when I think of the folly, the recklessness, the hard-heartedness of those from whom I had a right to expect pity, kindness, and love, the blood of nearly seventy years burns in my chilled veins.”

“Oh! forbear, sir, you are flushed, you are feverish, you cannot bear this exertion.”

“Interrupt me not when I have so much to say, such uncertain breath to utter it. I said I had centred all my wealth in my home; I was wrong; when my son was about sixteen,—unfortunate boy, left exposed to such pernicious influences,—I was called to Europe upon commercial business of great importance: during my residence there, some fortunate speculation, which it is unnecessary to detail, became to me a source of immense wealth. When I returned, and learned the extravagant career my wife had run, her boundless ambition to be first in every idle expenditure, I resolved to make a secret of my newly acquired riches, and vowed to hoard it, that my son, whom she was training as her disciple, might have an inheritance secure from her dissipation. I might have

secured it to him by law, but I had another object in view: I had a lesson to teach them both, a lesson they are yet bitterly to learn. I love my son, nature has gifted him with noble qualities, and had not heaven prostrated me upon this sick bed at the time I was most anxious to direct his education, he might have been a man; but left to the uncontrolled influence of such a mother, is it strange that he has lost the nobility of nature? Interrupt me not, my own dear Mary; my story yet remains to be told. Upon my return this mansion was vacated; though only a few miles from the city, it was too retired in winter for Mrs. Graham's gay propensities. I brought with me, from Europe, a young man, in the capacity of a servant, though his object was to come over to this country and find employment as a carpenter, being a poor but very ingenious mechanic. He came with me to this place, then deserted of its inmates; I brought him into this very room, I locked him within it till he had completed the work I had appointed him to do. He finished his task; bound by an oath of secrecy, he received the stipulated sum, left me and died soon after of a sudden disease. No being but myself knows the work he wrought.”

He paused from exhaustion, nor could he forbear to smile at the wild expression of Mary's countenance as she glanced round the room, almost expecting to see supernatural beings issue from the walls.

“There is nothing here to harm you, Mary,” continued he, after a pause; “I employed no unholy means; my journeyman laboured after a European

model. Now rise, my child, bolt both doors, that no one may enter unawares; you cannot draw the bolts with such a trembling hand; there, that is a little steadier. Now walk to the fire-place and press firmly with a downward motion against the lower pannel, the right side of the chimney; a little lower, firmer, harder; harder yet."

Mary obeyed the directions, bewildered and frightened at finding herself such a mysterious agent. The pannel suddenly slid, and a small secret closet was revealed.

"Mary, hand me the casket within that closet."

The heavy casket was placed on his bed; he drew from his bosom a small key, which was suspended from his neck by a chain, and bidding Mary unfasten the hasp, he immediately clasped it around her own. "And now, Mary," said he, with a more solemn, deeper accent, "you are in possession of the key that unlocks that foreign treasure I have so long secured from the unprincipled waste of wealth; hide it in your bosom, let not even the chain be visible, guard it as the bequest of a dying man, who is about to bequeath you a more sacred legacy still."

Mary sank on her knees by the bed-side and clasped his hands imploringly in hers. "Do not, do not, I entreat you, sir, bequeath this gold to me. It would weigh me down to the dust; this chain even now seems a string of fire around my neck. Your son, your son, the wealth is his, who is so fitting to receive it from your hands; he is worthy of your trust, he will not abuse it."

The sick man raised his feeble body with an energy that appalled her. "It is for the sake of that son, that now degenerate boy, I leave this in your immediate keeping. Within this casket is a letter to Henry, explaining to him all my wishes: put it back in the recess, replace the pannel and unbolt the doors. Approach me once more, and with your hand in mine, your eyes lifted to heaven, promise to obey me in my last directions, and my soul shall bless you in its parting hour."

Subdued and awe-stricken, Mary lifted her tearful eyes and faltered out the promise he exacted.

"It is enough; the lips of truth have vowed, and the vow will never be broken. When I am gone my estate will be involved in irremediable ruin; I have long foreseen this would be the result of such boundless extravagance. I have long since ceased to warn, for my unhappy son needs the lesson in store; adversity alone will rouse him from his mental and moral lethargy; let him but once be forced to call his powers into exercise by commanding necessity, and they will come like a legion of angels to his help in the hour of need; let him become poor, flatterers will desert him, beauty will slight him, he will turn from the hollow world and be regenerated. He must go through this stormy ordeal, and then, when all the dross is removed, when he stands unalloyed and firm on the independent basis of his own character, and not till then, may this casket, from whose contents you have in the mean time derived your own support, be committed into his keeping."

"But should the lesson fail, should he sink into despondency and inaction, once more I entreat——"

"You have promised, entreaties are vain; if the lesson should fail, he merits it not, and I leave it in worthier hands. You have been to me like the renovated spirit of my own youth; to you I look for every thing that remains of my comfort and support. I feel a faith, strong as that inspired by prophecy, that my son will shake the dust from his spirit and put on the beautiful garments of true manhood: you will not always remain the guardian of this treasure. As for her, who has alienated herself from me from the hour she became a bride, who has neglected me for long years on my sick bed, left me to the care of hirelings till God in his mercy sent me a loving and tender daughter in you, the time is to come, and soon, when she will cling to the reeds of fortune and find them break in her grasp; when, deserted by seeming friends, she will feel the horrors of solitude and remember me; let repentance be her dowry."

The voice of the sick man assumed a tone alarmingly hollow as he uttered the last words. His head sank back heavily on Mary's shoulder, who gazing in his face, saw that his eyes were fixed with a glassy stare. Though she felt a dreadful conviction that the effort he had just made had exhausted the strength of life, and that he was sinking at once, now the moment of excitement was passed, she did not lose her presence of mind. She laid him back on the pillow, and bathed his temples and face with the restorative waters, with which the chamber was supplied; she

chafed his cold hands, but the features remained rigid, the eyes moved not in answer to her fearful glance. She recollected that one waiting maid had been ordered to remain behind, and, ringing the bell till the girl ran in, she immediately despatched her for the physician. When he arrived and took the patient's hand, it fell like lead on the bed-side. His skill availed him nothing here—he was dead.

Mary now felt an awful responsibility resting upon her, rendered doubly solemn by the instantaneous death of him who had entrusted it—the delegated guardian of Henry's wealth and fame—the repository of a secret so strange as almost to baffle credulity. Mary felt all this, till she sank down in the hopelessness of despair: but even in this first hour of despair, she prayed that she might be strengthened by Him, who himself prayed, when bowed by more than mortal agonies; and the hope, the conviction that the son would be regenerated over the ashes of the father, came like the wing of an angel hovering over the gloom.

Mrs. Graham was shocked, excessively shocked, by the suddenness of the event. She shrieked and even fainted, when, on her return from the party, she found herself standing by the shrouded body of her husband, by the side of which Mary sat in the immobility of sorrow: she was reminded of her own mortality; the chill atmosphere of death oppressed and appalled her. The conviction that the gay, glittering life she was leading was nothing but a passage to the grave, the cold, deep, lonely grave, came over her heavily and suddenly.

Henry's grief was sincere. The poignancy of self-reproach added intolerable stings to filial affliction. While he had been engaged in selfish amusement, administering to the pleasures of an adulated beauty, given up to high and unhealthy excitement, the irreproachable Mary had clung to the anchor of duty—sustained his father's dying agonies and received his parting breath.

It was after every thing had subsided into the stillness of gloom, which succeeds such startling events, that Mary, whose energies of mind were now called into vigorous exercise by the responsibilities which had so mysteriously devolved upon her, endeavoured to extend that influence over the mind of Henry, which true moral excellence and modest, intellectual strength always give its possessor. Conscious of the reverse of fortune that awaited him, she tried to arouse his ambition by the purest and most exalted motives. She related the conversations she had often had with his father, when left alone with him in his sickness, in which he deplored the indolence of character, which permitted the most brilliant attributes of mind to remain mouldering in inaction. She told of the dreams in which he sometimes indulged, of loving to see the son of his hopes sitting in the high places of the land, swaying the multitude by his eloquence, watching over insulted laws, and avenging outraged humanity.

With a heart softened by sorrow, a conscience enlightened by the same salutary counsel, Henry

listened as to his better angel, and made the most ardent resolutions for the future.

Without entering into tedious and unprofitable details, it may be said here that Mr. Graham's executor found that he had died insolvent; that the consternation of the widow was unutterable, and the wonder and sympathy of her innumerable friends, as sincere and valuable as they usually are on such occasions. *Mulberry Grove*, the beautiful and stately mansion, was to be sold. Mrs. Graham was to take private lodgings in the city; her son was going on a European tour, and Mary was to return to the obscurity of her native village. Such were the on-dits of the world of fashion.

Among those who came to pay visits of condolence, after the knowledge of their worst misfortune, were Miss Devereux and her inseparable friend. She was on the eve of her departure to her native city, and mingled her expressions of sympathy for her friends, with the warmest words of gratitude for their attentions. She wanted to walk once more in that beautiful garden, which she should always remember as a model of the blended loveliness of nature and art. In the course of their walk, she managed so skilfully as to separate herself from her companion, and to be alone with Henry by the hedge. This accomplished coquette had no thought of departing with the glory of her conquest unacknowledged. Though his fallen fortunes rendered it of less consequence, his name was to be added to the number of her victims; for her ambition

stopped not at less than a hecatomb. The opportunity was irresistible; the temptation equally so. The sympathy she had assumed diffused a captivating softness over the lustre of her beauty, and there was an abandonment, an abstraction in her manner, that might have given encouragement to a bolder lover. The declaration was made: it was a pouring out of the whole heart and soul, with all the generous fervour of a first acknowledged attachment: as Miss Devereux afterwards told her confident, "it was the most graceful, impassioned, and heroic declaration she had ever received, and had she not been informed about his loss of wealth, she was afraid she might have been foolish enough to have consented." She heard him in silence, with downcast eyes, from which rays of gratified vanity were brightly stealing. She then drew back with the air of a queen, who is about to reject the petition of a vassal; was greatly surprised and distressed; she had never imagined the existence of such feelings on his part; uttered some cold words about friendship and esteem, courtesied gracefully, and moved towards the house, leaving Henry to reflections we have no wish to describe. The greatest kindness we can offer to a man of real and deep sensibility, who first discovers he has been the dupe of heartless vanity, is to "leave him to himself."

It was that very night, when the family had retired to rest, and the whole household in the quiet attendant on that lonely hour, Mary left the room, bearing in her hand a feeble lamp, and directed her steps to the

chamber lately occupied by Mr. Graham. She had formed the resolution of going back to the scenes of her childhood, in the midst of her mother's friends, and supporting herself by the exercise of her talents. She could teach a school; she was confident she could gain a subsistence. Nothing would induce her to remain an incumbent on Mrs. Graham. As the estate was to be sold, Mary deemed it her first duty to take possession of the treasure, of which she was made the reluctant guardian. Notwithstanding the sacredness of the charge, and the uprightness of her own principles, she trembled, and drew her breath quickly and short, as she opened the door of an apartment so lately solemnized by the awful presence of death, surrounded by the dim shadow of midnight, secret and alone. Notwithstanding her cautious movements, the wind, which blew with a strong current through the long hall, pressed against the door with such force that it eluded her grasp, and closed with a noise which almost terrified her from her purpose. Sick at heart, she sat down in the easy chair, which, but a little while before, she had seen occupied by the venerable form now covered with the mould of the grave. She lived over the last, impressive scene, heard again the solemn adjurations of paternal anguish, and her resolution became strengthened for the task. She rose—put down her lamp—pressed the secret door—drew forth the casket—replaced the panel, and lifting up the lamp, was turning towards the door, when the opposite one slowly opened, and Mrs. Graham stood before her. Mary uttered a faint

shriek, the lamp dropped from her hand, and she remained gazing on the apparition without the power of speech or motion.

"What is your business here?" at length exclaimed Mrs. Graham, her eye fixed as if by fascination on the casket—rushing towards her with exasperation in every feature.

"I came on an errand of duty," faltered Mary, with bloodless lips.

"And that casket, how came it in your possession? Am I to be plundered in my own household, by one whom my bounty has fed? Give it me this instant for your life."

Mary grasped it to her bosom with convulsive agony, yet with a resolution as firm as that with which the martyr clings to the cross, for which he is yielding up his life.

"Do you dare defy me thus?" exclaimed Mrs. Graham, seizing her arm, and shaking her with delirious force. "I'll rouse every servant in the household—minion—thief!"

"By the soul of the sainted dead, I am innocent!" cried Mary, emboldened by the consciousness of her own innocence, and the sacred guardianship to which she had been elected. "Touch not this, Mrs. Graham, as you would rest in your own dying hour. It was intrusted to me by your husband, with his last breath. I vowed to guard it till the hour appointed. Let not the curse of perjury rest upon me. Incur not the wrath of Heaven by disregarding the wishes, the commands of the dead."

Mrs. Graham was not in a situation to listen to any appeal. She had been kept awake by an acute nervous affection, which she had in vain endeavoured to soothe. Her indignation was boundless, her purpose immovable. Her hands seized the casket, which Mary vainly struggled to retain. Mrs. Graham was a tall, stately, strong woman; Mary a slender girl, with feeble muscles, that relaxed at last in the powerful grasp that held her.

"Oh! Henry, Henry!" shrieked the unfortunate girl, "where art thou?"

Mrs. Graham burst into a convulsive laugh, and held the casket in her right hand, extended over the victim now prostrate at her feet.

At that moment, as if Providence had marked out that night for its own particular purpose, the door was thrown back by a sudden motion, and Henry Graham stood before them. It would be strange indeed if a rejected man thought of slumber; it is certain he had not, but, racked by feelings that maddened him, he had walked his own room like a restless ghost, till Mary's shrill cry of agony, issuing from the chamber of death, pierced his ear, and brought him to the scene on which he now gazed in unutterable amazement. The majestic figure of his mother, in her white night-dress, and long black locks that, loosened in the struggle, streamed back from her brow, with uplifted arm, holding a glittering casket, standing over the pale and prostrate Mary, in that chamber where the shadows of death still lingered, suddenly confronted him.



"Gracious Heavens! what does this mean?" asked Henry.

"What does it mean?" repeated Mrs. Graham, dragging Mary forward with one hand, while she shook the casket in the other; "it means that this girl is a wretch, a plunderer, who steals in the silence of midnight to rifle your father's coffers, and rob you of your inheritance."

"Impossible, impossible!" exclaimed Henry. "Rise, Mary, rise and vindicate yourself from a charge so black."

The generous and devoted girl, even in the moment of despair, thought not of herself, but him. She hailed his sudden appearance as a direct interposition of Heaven, in vindication of his rights. Freeing herself from Mrs. Graham's now relaxing grasp, she clung to Henry with frantic energy.

"Oh! Henry, think not of me, but of yourself. That casket is yours; your father gave it in my keeping in his last hour. He resisted my prayers and tears that I might be spared such a trust. He made me swear by the Heaven that now hears me, to be true to the charge, to keep it, to cherish it, till adversity, unknown before, had called out the heaven-born energies within you. It was for your sake he has secreted this wealth for years. It was for your sake he committed it first to these feeble hands. He has left with it a letter, expressing to you all his wishes and his hopes. On the eve of returning to the obscurity of my own lot, obedient to the commands of the dead, I sought this chamber and took possession

of that fatal treasure. Oh! that he had left it in other hands than mine!"

Henry, at that moment, would as soon have doubted the evidence of truth itself, as the words of Mary. Free from the spell which had lately enthralled his faculties and dimmed his perception of right and wrong, he saw Mary's character in its own pure, exalted light. Throwing one arm around her, as if to shield her from the storm that had just swept her down, he turned to his mother, with the respect of a son, but the authority of a man, in his voice and manner:

"My mother, woe be unto those who break the commands that death has hallowed. By all that is sacred, I entreat you to restore what I must say, you have most unjustly assumed."

The conscience of Mrs. Graham had convinced her, as she listened to Mary's explanation, that she had shamefully wronged her, but her pride refused to yield to its convictions.

"No!" said Mary, "I never can resume its guardianship. Destiny has interposed to save me from this oppressive responsibility. Into your hands I now commit what Heaven has willed I should not retain. Here is the key, which your father suspended round my neck with his own hands. It was the last office they ever performed: almost the last words he ever uttered, was a prophecy of the future glory of your manhood. Oh! Henry, fulfil that dying prophecy, and it matters not who keeps the gold, which is but dust in the balance of such a reputation."



Henry took the casket from his mother's unresisting hand, knelt down and opened it in silence. He stopped not to count the gold, or to ascertain its immense value, but drawing out the paper directed to himself, closed it again, and gave it back to his mother.

"I have taken all I shall ever claim. Mother, this is yours, take it, and use it as you will. Mary is right in declining to receive it, and as for myself, I will read the stern lesson my father willed that I should learn. Nay, I will not keep it; I will earn my fortune, or be a poor man to the last day of my life."

Mrs. Graham refused and reasoned, but at last convinced herself that a mother was the most fitting person to be the guardian of her son's property. She would not consent to it but from that conviction. She condescended to ask Mary to forget the occurrence of the night, and to look upon her as she had ever done, considering her house, wherever it might be, as her home. But Mary, while she expressed gratitude for the offer and for past kindness, declared it her earnest wish to return to the village where she was born, mid scenes more congenial to her taste. Henry did not oppose this resolution. He respected the motive too highly, and her honour, her happiness would be promoted by the change.

It was a source of speculation, of surprise, when it was made known to the world, soon after this eventful night, that *Mulberry Grove* was not to pass from the possession of its owners. Mrs. Graham did not retrench her expenses, and of course the number of

her friends and flatterers remained undiminished. The removal of so humble and unpretending a being as Mary, was a matter of too little importance to excite observation, but when it was ascertained beyond a doubt, that the indolent and fashionable Henry Graham was become an indefatigable student of that profession which he had before only nominally embraced; when he was at length seen at the bar, in eloquence and power, pleading for injured innocence or violated right, then the world did indeed marvel at the transformation, and talk of it as a modern miracle.

We will pass over the events of the following year. They may be understood from one scene which took place in the little village of ———, at the close of a summer day. A group of gay, neatly dressed little girls were running merrily from the door of a low isolated building that stood in the middle of a green common. The sun-bonnets thrown recklessly back, the satchels swinging from their arms, the unbounded gaiety of their motions, all spoke "the playful children just let loose from school." A gentleman, who seemed to be a traveller, from the thick riding-dress he wore, on so mild a day, accosted one of the eldest children in that tone of habitual gentleness and courtesy, that even untaught children know how to appreciate. He asked if they were returning from school. An affirmative accompanied by a low courtesy, was the reply. "The name of the school-mistress?" "Mary Hawthorne—yonder she comes;" and the affectionate child ran to her beloved instructress, to announce the approach of the stranger. But Mary's

eye needed not the annunciation. She had recognized the well-known form of Henry Graham, and the next moment her hand was in his.

"Mary Hawthorne!" For eighteen months she had not heard his voice. Past scenes rushed to her recollection, and joy and exultation swelled her heart. She knew that his father's prophecy was fulfilled. During the months of their separation, he had constantly written to her, and every letter breathed the progressive elevation of his soul. She had followed in spirit, with trembling anxiety, his onward course, till it had reached the goal of fame, and now he stood before her, as his dying father so eloquently expressed, "in the beautiful robes of true manhood." And Mary, too, was changed. The consciousness of exciting so noble an influence as she had, over a naturally noble mind, the exertion of her own independent faculties, and the pure air she breathed in those beautiful regions, had imparted a glow to her countenance, and a vigour to her frame, they had never before possessed. Her face was now radiant with the most lovely expression the female lineaments can wear.

"You have grown handsome, Mary, as well as blooming," said Henry, as they walked together towards Mary's rural home; and Mary, who seldom blushed, coloured like a true heroine, at the unwonted compliment.

That evening, after having related all the struggles he had sustained with constitutional and habitual indolence, the counteracting influence of his mother, who considered the course he was pursuing as de-

grading rather than exalting; after an hour of the most unbounded confidence, Henry drew from his bosom the letter of his father, which he had taken from the memorable casket.

"Mary, the time has arrived when I may ask you to read this letter. My whole soul and heart are in my father's wishes. On your decision—" he was too much agitated to go on. He placed the letter in her hands, and gazed in silence on her downcast face while she perused its contents. He saw, through gathering tears and rushing crimson, gratitude, joy, and shame. He remembered the moment when, after having warned him of the arts of Miss Devereux, he had accused her of "knowing little of love," and her countenance had so eloquently vindicated the charge. He felt that through all his errors he had been beloved, and he wondered at himself that he could ever have been insensible to such real and exalted loveliness.

Is it needful to say what were Mr. Graham's solemn wishes, what the decision on which the happiness of Henry's existence depended? That he should take this inestimable girl as his wife, as a legacy more precious than the gold of the East; and she did become his wife, and he never regretted the hour when he was discarded by the beautiful Miss Devereux.

## The Drunkard's Daughter.

KATE FRANKLIN sat at the window, watching the lightning that streamed through the sky, till her eyes were almost blinded by the glare. She was naturally timid, and had an unusual dread of a thunder-storm, yet though the lightning ran down in rills of fire, and the thunder rolled till the earth shook with its reverberations, she kept her post of danger, repeating, as she gazed abroad, "Oh! that I were a boy, that I might venture abroad in search of my father! It is almost midnight, yet he is not returned. He will perish in a storm like this. Oh! that I were a boy!" she again passionately exclaimed—while the rain began to drive against the casement, and the wind swept the branches of the trees roughly by the panes. She held a young baby in her arms, which she had just lulled to sleep, and her mother lay sleeping in a bed in the same apartment. All slumbered but Kate, who for hours had watched from the window for her father's return. At length her resolution was taken: she laid the babe by her mother's side, drew down the curtain to exclude the lightning's glare, and throwing a shawl around her, softly opened the door, and soon found herself in the street, in the midst of the thunder, the lightning, and the rain. How strong must have been the impulse, how intense the anxiety, which could have induced a timid young girl to come out at that lone, silent hour, on such a night, without a pro-

tector or a guide! She flew along at first, but the rain and the wind beat in her face, and the lightning bewildered her with its lurid corruscations. Then pausing for breath, she shaded her eyes, and looking fearfully around, gazed on every object, till her imagination clothed it with its own wild imagery.

At length her eye fell on a dark body extended beneath a tree by the way-side. She approached it, trembling, and kneeling down, bent over it, till she felt a hot breath pass burningly over her cheek, and just then a sheet of flame rolling round it, she recognized but too plainly her father's features. She took his hand, but it fell impassive from her hold. She called upon his name, she put her arms around his neck and tried to raise him from the earth, but his head fell back like lead, and a hoarse breathing sound alone indicated his existence.

"Father, dear father, wake and come home!" she cried, in a louder tone; but the thunder's roar did not rouse him, how much less her soft, though earnest voice. Again she called, but she heard only the echoes of night repeating her own mournful adjuration—"Father, dear father, come home!"

How long she thus remained, she knew not; but the wind and the rain subsided, the lightning flashed with a paler radiance, and at intervals the wan moon might be seen wading through the gray, watery clouds. She felt her strength exhausted, and clasping her hands together, lifted her eyes, streaming with tears, almost wishing a bolt would fall and strike them both simultaneously.

"My father is lost!" said she, "and why should I wish him to live? Why should I wish to survive him?"

The sound of horse's feet approaching startled her. The horseman checked his speed as he came opposite the tree, where Kate still knelt over her father, and as the lightning played over her white garments, which, being wet by the rain, clung closely around her, she might well be mistaken for an apparition. Her shawl had fallen on the ground, her hair streamed in dripping masses over her face, and her uplifted arms were defined on the dark background of an angry sky. The horse reared and plunged, and the rider dismounting, came as near to the spot as the impetuous animal would allow.

"Oh! Harry Blake, is it you?" exclaimed Kate. "Then my father will not be left here to die!"

"Die!" repeated Harry; "what can have happened? Why are you both abroad such a night as this?"

"Alas!" said Kate, "I could not leave my father to perish. I sought him through the storm, and I find him thus."

While she was speaking, Harry had fastened the bridle of his horse to the tree, and stooped down on the other side of Mr. Franklin. Kate's first feeling on his approach was a transport of gratitude—now she was overwhelmed with shame; for she knew, as Harry inhaled the burning exhalation of his breath, his disgraceful secret would be revealed—that secret which her mother and herself had so long in anguish concealed.

"Poor Kate!" involuntarily burst from his lips, as he gazed on the prostrate and immoveable form of the man he had so much loved and respected. Had he seen him blasted by the lightning's stroke, he could not have felt more shocked or grieved. He comprehended in a moment the full extent of his degradation, and it seemed as if an awful chasm, yawning beneath his feet, now separated him, and would for ever separate him from his instructor and friend.

"Kate," said he, and his voice quivered from emotion, "this is no place for you. You are chilled by the rain—you will be chilled to death, if you remain in your wet garments. Let me see you safe at home, and I will return to your father, nor leave him till he is in a place of security."

"No, no!" cried Kate, "I think not of myself, only assist me to raise him, and lead him home, and I care not what happens to me. I knew it would come to this at last. Oh! my poor father!"

Harry felt that there was no consolation for such grief, and he attempted not to offer any. He put a strong arm round the unhappy man, and raised him from the ground, still supporting his reeling body and calling his name in a loud, commanding tone. Mr. Franklin opened his eyes with a stupid stare, and uttered some indistinct, idiotic sounds, then letting his head fall on his bosom, he suffered himself to be led homeward, reeling, tottering, and stumbling at every step. And this man, so helpless and degraded, so imbruted and disgusting, that his very daughter, who had just periled her life in the night-storm to

secure him from danger, and turned away from him, even while she supported him, with unconquerable loathing, was a member of Congress, a distinguished lawyer—eloquent at the bar, and sagacious in council—a citizen respected and beloved; a friend generous and sincere—a husband once idolized—a father once adored. The young man who had walked by his side, had been for more than a year, a student in his office, and sat under his instruction, as Paul sat at the feet of Gamaliel. Now, in the expressive language of Scripture, he could have exclaimed, "Oh, Lucifer, thou son of the morning, how low art thou fallen!" but he moved on in silence, interrupted occasionally by the ill-repressed sobs of Kate. He had been that day to an adjoining town to transact some business for Mr. Franklin, and being detained to an unusually late hour, was overtaken by the storm, when the agonized voice of Kate met his ear.

Harry lingered a moment at Mr. Franklin's door before he departed. He wanted to say something expressive of comfort and sympathy to Kate, but he knew not what to say.

"You will never mention the circumstances of this night, Harry," said Kate, in a low, hesitating tone. "I cannot ask you to respect my father as you have done, but save him, if it may be, from the contempt of the world."

"If he were my own father, Kate," cried Harry, "I would not guard his reputation with more jealous care. Look upon me henceforth as a brother, and

call upon me as such, when you want counsel, sympathy or aid. God bless you, Kate."

"Alas! there is no blessing for a drunkard's daughter," sighed Kate, as she turned from the door and listened to her father's deep, sonorous breathing, from the sofa on which he had staggered, and where he lay stretched at full length, till long after the dawning of morn, notwithstanding her efforts to induce him to change his drenched garments.

Mrs. Franklin was an invalid, and consequently a late riser. Kate usually presided at the breakfast table, and attended to her father's wants. This morning he took his accustomed seat, but his coffee and toast remained untasted. He sat with his head leaning upon his hand, his eyes fixed vacantly on the wall, and his hair matted and hanging in neglected masses over his temples. Kate looked upon his face, and remembered when she thought her father one of the handsomest men she had ever seen—when dignity was enthroned upon his brow, and the purity as well as the majesty of genius beamed from his eye. He lifted his head and encountered her fixed gaze—probably followed the current of her thoughts, for his countenance darkened, and pushing his cup far from him, he asked her, in a surly tone, why she stared so rudely upon him?

Kate tried to answer, but there was suffocation in her throat, and she could not speak.

Mr. Franklin looked upon her for a moment with a stern, yet wavering glance, then rising and thrusting back his chair against the wall, he left the

house, muttering as he went, "curses not loud, but deep."

Kate had become gradually accustomed to the lowering cloud of sullenness, which the lethargy of inebriation leaves behind it. She had heard by almost imperceptible degrees, the voice of manly tenderness assume the accents of querulousness and discontent; but she had never met such a glance of defiance, or witnessed such an ebullition of passion before. Her heart rose in rebellion against him, and she trembled at the thought that she might learn to hate him as he thus went on, plunging deeper and deeper in the gulf of sensuality.

"No, no, no!" repeated she to herself, "let me never be such a monster. Let me pity, pray for him, love him if I can—but let me never forget that he is my father still."

Young as Kate was, she had learned that endurance, not happiness, was her allotted portion. Naturally high-spirited and impetuous, with impassioned feelings and headlong impulses, in prosperity she might have become haughty and ungovernable; but subjected in early youth to a discipline, of all others the most galling to her pride, her spirit became subdued, and her passions restrained by the same process by which her principles were strengthened, and the powers of her mind precociously developed. Her brothers and sisters had all died in infancy, except one, now an infant in the cradle, a feeble, delicate child, for whom every one prophesied an early grave was appointed.

Mrs. Franklin herself was constitutionally feeble, and yielding to the depression of spirits caused by her domestic misfortunes, indulged in constant and ineffectual complainings, which added to the gloom of the household, without producing amendment or reformation in its degraded master. She was very proud, and had been a very beautiful woman, who had felt for her husband an attachment romantically strong, for it was fed by the two strongest passions of her heart—pride, which exulted in the homage paid to his talents and his graces, and vanity, which delighted in the influence her beauty exercised over his commanding mind. Now, his talents and graces were obscured by the murky cloud of intemperance, and her languishing beauty no longer received its accustomed incense; the corrosions of mortification and peevish discontent became deeper and deeper, and life one scene of gloom and disquietude.

Kate grew up amidst these opposing influences like a beautiful plant in a barren, ungenial soil. To her father, she was the delicate but hardy saxifrage, blooming through the clefts of the cold, dry rock; to her mother, the sweet anemone, shedding its blossoms over the roots of the tree from which it sprung—fragrant, though unnurtured, neglected and alone.

It would be too painful to follow, step by step, Mr. Franklin's downward course. Since the night of his public exposure he had gone down, down, with a fearfully accelerated motion, like the mountain stream, when it leaps over its rocky barrier. Public confidence was gradually withdrawn, clients and friends



forsook him, and ruin trod rapidly on the steps of shame.

Harry Blake clung to him, till he saw his once powerful mind partaking so far of the degradation of his body, as to be incapable of imparting light to his. He now felt it due to himself to dissolve the connection subsisting between them—and he called, though reluctantly, to bid him farewell. Mr. Franklin seemed much agitated when Harry informed him of his intended departure. He knew the cause, and it seemed as if the last link was about to be severed that bound him to the good and honourable. Harry had been to him a delightful companion; and, in the days of his unsullied reputation, it had been one of his most interesting tasks to direct a mind so buoyant and aspiring, and which owned, with so much deference, the overmastering influence of his own.

"Do not go yet, Harry," said he; "I have much, much to say to you, and I may never have another opportunity. I have anticipated this moment. It is painful, but justice to yourself demanded it."

Harry seated himself, pale from suppressed emotion, while Mr. Franklin continued speaking, walking up and down the room, every feature expressive of violent agitation.

"I have never yet to a human being introduced the subject of which I am about to speak—not even to my wife and daughter. I have never rolled back the current of time, and revealed the spot where, standing on the quicksands of youth, the first wave of temptation washed over me. I could not bear to allude to

the history of my degradation. But you, Harry, are going among strangers, amid untried scenes—and I would warn you now, with the solemnity of a man who knows he has sealed his own everlasting ruin, to beware of the first downward step. You do not know me, sir—no one knows me; they know not my parentage, or the accursed stream that runs in these veins.

"My father was called the King of the Drunkards! He drank till he was transformed, breath, bones, and sinew, into flame, and then he died—the most horrible of all deaths—of spontaneous combustion. Yes, he was the King of the Drunkards! I remember when a little boy, I saw him walking at the head of a long procession, with a banner flying, as if in triumph, and a barrel of whiskey rolling before, on which the drummer made music as they walked. And shouts went up in the air, and people applauded from the windows and the doors—and I thought the drunkard's was a merry life. But when I grew older, and saw my mother's cheek grow paler and paler, and knew that my father's curses and threats, and brutal treatment were the cause—when I saw her at length die of a broken heart, and heard the neighbours say that my father had killed her, and that he would have to answer for her death at the great bar of Heaven!—I began to feel an indescribable dread and horror, and looked upon my father with loathing and abhorrence! And when he died—when his body was consumed by flames, which seemed to me emblematical of the winding-sheet in which his soul was wrapped—I fled



from my native town, my native State; I begged my bread from door to door. At length, a childless stranger took me in. He pitied my forlorn condition—clothed, fed, and educated me. Nature had given me talents, and now opportunity unfolded them. I became proud and ambitious, and I wanted to convince my benefactor that I was no vulgar boy. Conscious of the dregs from which I had been extracted I was resolved to make myself a name and fame—and I have done it. You know it, Harry—I have taken my station in the high places of the land; and the time has been, when but to announce yourself as my student, would have been your passport to distinction. Well, do you want to know what made me what I am?—what, when such a burning beacon was forever blazing before my memory, hurried me on to throw my own blasted frame into a drunkard's dishonoured grave? I will tell you, young man—it was the *wine* cup!—the glass offered by the hand of beauty, with smiles and adulation! I had made a vow over my mother's ashes that I would never drink. I prayed God to destroy me, body and soul, if I ever became a drunkard. But *wine*, they said, was one of God's best gifts, and it gladdened without inebriating—it was ingratitude to turn from its generous influence. I believed them, for it was alcohol that consumed my father. And I drank wine at the banquet and the board—and I drank porter and ale, and the rich-scented cordial—and I believed myself to be a temperate man. I thought I grew more intellectual; I could plead more eloquently, and my tongue made

more music at the convivial feast. But when the excitement of the scene was over, I felt languid and depressed. My head ached, and my nerves seemed unsheathed. A thirst was enkindled within me, that wine could no longer quench. A hereditary fire was burning in my veins. I had lighted up the smouldering spark, and it now blazed, and blazed. I knew I was destroying myself, but the power of resistance was gone. When I first tasted, I was undone! Beware, Harry, beware! To save you from temptation, I have lifted the veil, and laid bare before you the hell of a drunkard's bosom. But no! that cannot be. The Invisible alone can witness the agonies of remorse, the corroding memories, the anticipated woes, the unutterable horrors that I endure and dread—and expect to endure as long as the Great God himself exists."

He paused, and sunk down exhausted into a chair. Large drops of sweat rolled down his livid brow—his knees knocked together, his lips writhed convulsively, every muscle seemed twisted, and every vein swollen and blackened. Harry was terrified at this paroxysm. He sprang toward him, and untying the handkerchief from his neck, handed him a glass of water with trembling hands. Mr. Franklin looked up, and meeting Harry's glance of deep commiseration, his features relaxed, and large tears, slowly gathering, rolled down his cheeks. He bent forward, and extending his arms across the table, laid his head on them; and deep, suffocating sobs burst forth, shaking his frame, as if with strong spasms. Harry was unutterably affected. He had never seen man weep thus before. He knew

they were tears wrung by agony, the agony of remorse; and while he wept in sympathy, he gathered the hope of his regeneration from the intensity of his sufferings.

"I pity you, Mr. Franklin," said he, "from my soul I pity you—but you must not give yourself up as lost. God never yet tempted a man beyond his strength. You may, you can, you *must* resist. For your own sake, for your wife's—your daughter's sake, I conjure you."

"My daughter's!" interrupted Mr. Franklin, lifting his head. "Ah! that name touches the chord that still vibrates. Poor Kate! poor Kate! The hand that should have blessed has blighted her young hopes. My wife reproaches me, and gives me gall and vinegar, even when I would meet her with smiles. But Kate never gave me one reproach but her tears. I once thought you loved her, and that I should see the two objects I most loved, happy in each other's affections, and scattering roses over the pillow of my declining years. But that can never be now; your proud father will never permit you to marry a drunkard's daughter." He spoke this in a bitter tone, and a smile of derision for a moment curled his lips.

"You thought right," exclaimed Harry, passionately, "I have loved her, I do love her, as the best, the loveliest, the most exalted of human beings. I would not pain you, sir, but you constrain me to speak the truth: my father has forbidden me to think of such a union, and as I am now dependent on him, I could not brave his commands without seeking to plunge your daughter into poverty and sorrow. Yet I will not deceive you.

I would have braved everything with her consent, but she refuses to listen to vows, unsanctioned by parental authority. The time, I trust, will come when, having secured an independence, by my energies, I may dare to speak and act as a man, and woo her to be my wife in the face of the world."

"Yes! yes!" repeated Mr. Franklin, "the time may come, but I shall not live to see it. There is at times such a deadly faintness, such a chilly weight here," laying his hand on his breast, "it seems as though I could feel the cold fingers of death clutching round my heart and freezing my life-blood. If I did not warm the current with fresh streams of alcohol, I should surely die. Then this aching brow, this throbbing brain, these quivering nerves, and shaking limbs, are they not all the heralds of coming dissolution?—Harry, I do not mean to distress you—I have but one thing more to say: if you resist temptation, and I pray God you may, dare not triumph over the fallen. Oh! you know not, you dream not, in the possession of unclouded reason and unblighted faculties, the proud master of yourself, what that wretch endures, who, beset by demons on every side, feels himself dragged down lower and lower, incapable of resistance, to the very verge of the bottomless pit."

He wrung Harry's hand in his, then turned and left the office. Harry followed, oppressed and awe-struck by the revelations he had heard. Temptation, sin, sorrow, disgrace, death, judgment, and eternity, swept like dark phantoms across his mind; chasing away hope, love, joy, and heaven; even the image of Kate

Franklin flitted mournfully in the back-ground, fading and indistinct as a vanishing rainbow.

Kate grieved at Harry's departure, but it was a grief which vented itself in tears. She was affected by his disinterested attachment; she esteemed his virtues and admired his character, and in sunnier hours she might have indulged in those sweet day-dreams of love, which throw over the realities of life the hues of heaven. But she felt it was hers to endure and to struggle, not to enjoy—she dared not fix her gaze on the single star that shone through the dark clouds closing around her, lest it should charm her into a forgetfulness of the perils and duties of her situation; so gathering all her energies, as the traveller folds his mantle over his breast to shield him from the tempest, the more fearful the storm, the more firm and strong became her powers of resistance. It was summer when Harry departed, and Kate, though she never mentioned his name, found his remembrance associated with the flowers, the fragrance, and the moonlight of that beautiful season; but when winter came on, with its rough gales, and sleet and snow—for she lived on the granite hills of New England, where the snow-spirit revels amid frost-work and ice—she sat by a lonely fire, watching her father's late return, or nursing the fretful and delicate babe in her mother's chamber, all the anticipated ills of poverty hanging darkly over her, Kate found her only comfort in communing with her God, to whom, in the dearth of all earthly joy, she had turned for support and consolation, and as her religious faith increased, her fortitude

strengthened, and her stern duties became easier of performance. One night she sat alone by the fireside—and it was a most tempestuous night, the wind howled and tossed the naked boughs of the trees against the windows, which rattled as if they would shiver in the blast; and the snow, drifted by its violence, blew in white wreaths on the glass and hung its chill drapery on the walls. She sat on a low seat in the corner, her Bible on her knees, a dim fire burning on the hearth, for cold as it was, she would not suffer it to be replenished with fuel which her mother might yet want for her own comfort. She was gradually accustoming herself to personal privations, voluntarily abstaining from every luxury, not knowing how soon she might need the necessities of life. She was reading the sublime book of Job, and when she came to the words, "Hast thou entered into the snow? Hast thou seen the treasures of the hail?" she repeated them aloud, struck with the force, mid the wintry scene around her. At this moment her father entered. It was an unusually early hour for his return, and as he walked forward she noticed with joy that his step was less fluctuating than usual. He bent shivering over the fire, which Kate immediately kindled afresh, and a bright blaze soon diffused warmth and cheerfulness through the apartment.

"I heard your voice as I entered, Kate," said he; "where is your companion?"

"There," answered she, lifting the Bible from her knees—"here is the companion of my solitude, and a very pleasing one I find it."

Mr. Franklin fixed his eyes steadfastly on Kate for a few moments, throwing himself back in his chair, gazed upon the ceiling, and spoke as in a soliloquy—

"I remember when I was a little boy, reading that book at my mother's knee, and when she was dying she told me never to lay my head upon the pillow without reading a chapter and praying to the Great God for pardon and protection. But that was a long time ago. I would not open it now for the universe."

"Oh! father!" exclaimed Kate, "do not say so. Young as I am, I have lived too long if the promises written here be not true. They alone have saved me from despair."

"Despair!" repeated he, in a hollow tone—"yes, that is the fitting word, but it belongs to me alone. You are innocent and virtuous, and why should you talk of despair? You have no brand on your brow, no thunder-scar graven by the Almighty's hand, from which men turn away, and women shrink from with horror. I am an object of loathing and scorn to all. Even you, my own daughter, who once lived in my bosom, if I should open my arms to enfold you, as I was wont to do, would shrink from me, as from the leper's touch."

"Oh! no, no!" cried Kate, springing from her seat, and throwing her arms impulsively around his neck, while her tears literally rained on his shoulder.

It had been long months since she had heard such a gush of tenderness from his lips—since she had dared to proffer the caresses of affection. She thought all natural feeling was dried up in his heart—withered,

scorched by the fiery breath of intemperance. She had locked her grief and humiliation in her own breast. She believed every appeal to her reason and sensibility would be as unavailing as if made to the granite of her native hills. She now reproached herself for her coldness and reserve. She accused herself of neglect and irreverence.

"Oh, my father!" she exclaimed, "if you still love me I will not despair. There is hope, there will be joy. You have but to make one great effort, and you will be free once more. Chains, strong as adamant, cannot bind the soul to sin, unless it is a willing captive. You are wretched now; we are all wretched. No smiles gladden our household. My mother lies on a bed of languishment, where a breaking heart has laid her. My little sister pines like a flower, which sunbeams never visited; and I—oh, father! words can never tell the wo, the anguish, the agony, which I have pent up in my bosom, till it threatened to destroy me. I would not reproach you—I would not add one drop to your cup of bitterness—but I must speak now, or I die."

Excited beyond her power of self-control, Kate slid from her father's relaxing arms, and taking the Bible, which lay upon her chair, in both hands, prostrated herself at his feet.

"By this blessed book," continued she, in an exalted voice, "this book which has poured oil and balsam in my bleeding heart, this book, so rich in promises, so fearful in threatenings—by the God who created you to glorify Him, the Saviour who died to

redeem you—by your immortal and endangered soul—I pray thee to renounce the fatal habit, which has transformed our once blissful home into a prison-house of shame, sorrow, and despair.”

She paused, breathless from intense emotion, but her uplifted hands still clasped the sacred volume; her cheek glistening with tears, was mantled with crimson; and her eyes, turned up to her father, beamed with the inspiration of the Christian's hope.

Mr. Franklin looked down upon his daughter, as she thus knelt before him, and it seemed as if a ray from the Divine intelligence darted like a glory from her eyes into the depths of his soul. Lost, ruined as he was, there was still hope of his redemption. He might be saved. She, like a guiding cherub, might still take him by the hand, and lead him back to the green paths of pellucid streams where he had once walked with undoubting footsteps. As these thoughts rolled through his mind, he bent forward, lower and lower, till his knees touched the floor. He wrapped his arms around Kate, and, leaning his head on her shoulder, sobbed aloud. The prayer of the publican trembled on his lips—“Oh, my God! have mercy upon me, a miserable sinner! Oh, Thou who was once tempted, yet never sinned, save me from temptation!”

It was long before other sounds interrupted the hallowed silence which succeeded. Kate hardly dared to breathe, lest she should disturb the communion her father's soul was holding with the being he invoked. Her heart ached with the fulness of hope that flowed

into it from channels long sealed. Had he made promises of amendment in his own strength, she might have feared their stability, but now, when she saw him prostrate in the dust, in tears and humiliation, crying for mercy from the depths of a wounded and contrite spirit, she believed that He, “whose fan is in His hand,” had come to winnow the chaff from the wheat, before the whole should be consumed with unquenchable fire.

It was midnight before she rose to retire to her chamber. She felt unwilling to leave her father. It seemed to her that this night was the crisis of her destiny—that angels and demons were wrestling for his soul—that the angels had prevailed; but might not the demons return? or the good angels, too sure of their victory, wing their way back to the skies? Long after she had retired to bed, she heard him walk backwards and forwards, and sometimes she heard his voice ascending as in prayer.

“Hear him, gracious Father!” cried she, from her moistened pillow, “hear him, answer and bless him!”

Then folding her arms closely round the infant, who slumbered by her side, she gradually fell asleep, and it will throw no shade over her filial piety to believe, that no one thought of Henry Blake, associated with pure images of future felicity, gilded her dreams. How long she slept, she knew not; but she awoke with a strange feeling of suffocation, and, starting up in bed, looked wildly around her. She saw nothing, but the chamber seemed filled with smoke, and a hollow, crackling sound met her ear. The dread of fire

for a moment paralyzed her limbs. It was but a moment—when springing from her bed, the infant still cradled on her arm, she opened the door, and found the terrible reality of her fears. Such a rush of hot air pressed upon her, she staggered back, panting and bewildered. The flames were rolling in volumes through the next apartment, and the wind, blowing in violence through the outer door, which was open, fearfully accelerated the work of destruction.

"My father!" shrieked Kate; "my father!—where is he?"

That fearful cry awoke the child, who screamed and clung in terror closer to her bosom; but her mother, who seldom slept except under the influence of powerful opiates, lay still unmoved, unconscious of the terrific element which was raging around her.

"Mother!" cried Kate, frantically, "wake or you die! The house is in flames!—they are rolling towards us!—they are coming! Oh! my God—mother, awake!"

She shook her arm with violence, and shrieked in her ear; but, though she moved and spoke, she seemed in a lethargy so deep, that nothing could rouse her to a sense of her danger.

The flames began to curl their forked tongues around the very door of the chamber, and the house shook and quivered as if with the throes of an earthquake. Kate knew she could make her own escape through a door, in an opposite direction; but she resolved, if she could not save her mother, to perish with her. She would have her lifted in her arms, were it not for the infant clinging to her bosom. Perchance that infant

might be saved. She rushed through the door, made her way through the drifting snow to the street, laid the child down on the chill but soft bank by the wall-side, silently commending it to the protection of God,—then winged her way back to the building, though the flames were now bursting from the roof, and reddening the snow with their lurid glare.

"Mother, dear mother, speak if you live," cried Kate, shuddering at the supernatural sounds of her own voice. A faint groan issued from the bed, round which the flames were rapidly gathering. It is astonishing what strength is given by desperation. Kate was a slender girl, of delicate frame, unused to physical exertion, but now she felt nerved with a giant's strength. She took up her mother in her arms, just as the fire caught the bed curtain, and communicated even to her night-dress. Smothering the blaze with the blanket she had dragged from the bed in rescuing her mother, she flew rather than walked, burdened as she was, the flames roaring and hissing behind her, gaining upon her at every step—the hot air almost stifling her breath, even while her naked feet were plunging through the snow drifts, and the frosts penetrating her thin night wrapper. It seemed as if ages of thought and feeling were compressed in that awful moment. Her father's dreaded fate—her little sister freezing on the snow—the servants probably perishing in the flames—her houseless mother fainting in her arms—her own desolate condition—all was as vividly impressed on her mind as the lurid blaze of the conflagration on the dark grey of the wintry night. She



bent her steps to the nearest dwelling, which was the residence of Mr. Blake, the father of Harry. She reached the threshold, and fell with her now senseless burden, heavily against the door. She tried to call aloud for assistance, but no sound issued from her parched and burning lips. She endeavored to lift her right hand to the knocker, but it was numb and powerless, and in her left, which encircled her mother, she felt for the first time the most intense pain.

"Merciful Father!" thought she, "thou who has sustained us thus far, leave us not to perish!"

Even while this prayer burst from her soul, footsteps approached, the door opened, and Mr. Blake, accompanied by a servant, bearing a lamp, stood upon the threshold. He had been awakened a few minutes before by the reflection of the blaze in his chamber, and had just aroused his family, when the sudden jarring of the door excited his alarm. He recoiled at first with horror from the spectacle which he beheld. Mrs. Franklin, white, ghastly and still, lay to all appearance dead, in the nerveless arms of her daughter, who, pale, prostrate, and voiceless, could only lift her imploring eyes, and moan the supplication her lips vainly sought to express. Mr. Blake had forbidden his son to marry a *drunkard's daughter*, and he had looked coldly on Kate, secretly condemning her for the influence she unconsciously exercised over his destiny. But he was not a hard-hearted man, though very proud, and his wife was a repository of heaven's own influences. Under her anxious superintendence, the sufferers were soon placed in warm beds, and every

means used for the resuscitation of the one, and the renovation of the other, while Mr. Blake, with the male part of the household, hastened to the scene of the conflagration. The main building was now enveloped in fire, but the kitchen was still standing, and he rejoiced to see the servants rushing to and fro, trying to save something, perhaps their own property, from the ruins. He looked around in search of the unhappy master, and trembled at the supposition that he might have found a funeral pyre. There was nothing to be done—the work of destruction was almost consummated, and he was turning away sick at heart, when he thought he saw a bundle lying near the wall where he stood. He stooped down, and beheld with astonishment a sleeping infant. At first he thought it dead, but when he raised it, and touched his cheek to its cold face, he felt its sweet breath stealing softly over his lips, and its little hand instinctively clasped his neck. He was inexpressibly affected, and gathering the folds of his cloak around it, he pressed it to his bosom with a father's tenderness. Never had he been so struck with the special providence of God, as in the preservation of this little outcast. Angels must have brooded over it, and impressed their heavenly warmth upon its chilly bed. But who had laid it so tenderly in its snowy cradle, aloof from the smoke and the blaze? Who but she whose filial arms had borne her mother to his own door! As he answered this interrogation to himself, his heart smote him for his injustice to the heroic girl who had made such unparalleled exertions. He almost wished Harry



was at home—but this was a moment of excitement; when he became calmer, he rejoiced at his absence.

Mr. Franklin had not perished in the ruins. After Kate had left him, his newly awakened feelings of remorse raged with frenzy in his bosom. No longer soothed by his daughter's caresses, and sustained by her prayers, the blackness of despair rolled over him. He could not compose himself to rest—the room seemed too small to contain the mighty conflict of his feelings. He could not bear to look upon the blazing hearth, and feel the fires raging within. He went to the door, and as the cold wind blew on his brow, he felt inexpressible relief, and leaving the door unlatched, he rushed abroad, reckless where he went, provided he could escape from himself. The farther he roamed from his own home, the more he seemed to lose the consciousness of his own identity, till exhausted in body and mind, he threw himself down on the floor of an uninhabited dwelling, which had often been the scene of his drunken orgies. There he lay, while the fire which he left blazing on the hearth, fanned by the blast howling through the open door, reveled uncontrolled and unconquerable. When at morning he sought his homestead, he found it a heap of smouldering ruins—and he knew the work of destruction was his. He remembered how the door creaked in the blast, and in his madness he would not return. While he stood gazing in speechless agony on the wreck, Mr. Blake approached, and taking him by the arm, drew him to his own dwelling. Like the friends of Job, he spoke not, for "he saw his grief was very

great." His wife, whom he had once tenderly loved, and who, in his chastened mood, came back to his memory, clothed in all the sweetness of which his vices had robbed her, lay on her deathbed. Though rescued by filial devotion from a fiery grave, she had swallowed the breath of the flames, and her chafed and wounded spirit was passing into the presence of her Maker. She could not speak, but she knew him as he entered, and stretching out her feeble hand, her dying glance spoke only pity and forgiveness. The unhappy man knelt by her side, and burying his face in the bed-cover, gave way to a burst of anguish, that was like the rending asunder of body and soul. And Kate, too, lay there by the side of her dying mother, with frozen feet, blistered hands, and feverish brow—with her bright locks scorched and disheveled—her eyes bloodshot and dim. This, too, was *his* work. There are calamities which come immediately from the hand of God, and man bows in weakness before the majesty of the power that overwhelms him. The pestilence that walketh in darkness—the tempest that wasteth at noonday—the earthquake—the flood—are ministers of his vengeance, and come clothed with an authority so high and sacred, the boldest and strongest dare not rebel. But when the sufferer stands amid ruin his own hand has wrought—when conscience tells him he has arrogated to himself the fearful work of destruction, and stolen and winged the darts of death—there is an unfathomable wo, an immedicable wound, an undying remorse—an antepast on earth of the retributions of

heaven. Let no one say the horrors of intemperance are exaggerated! Here fire and death had done their part, but murder had not yet reddened the black catalogue of sin. Happy, comparatively happy, the inebriate who is arrested in his headlong career, before the blood of innocence, mingling with the libations of Bacchus, brands him with the curse of Cain—the indelible stamp of infamy, which his own life, poured out on the scaffold, cannot efface, and which is handed down an inalienable heritage, to his children's children.

The day after the remains of the ill-fated Mrs. Franklin were consigned to the grave, the citizens of the place assembled in the town hall, to make arrangements for the relief of the suffering family. Their sympathies were strongly excited in behalf of the heroine, Kate—and in the hour of his calamity they remembered Mr. Franklin as he was in his high and palmy days, when his voice had so often filled the hall where they were met, with strains of the loftiest eloquence. They had seen him prostrated on the grave of his wife, in sorrow that refused consolation, and they felt towards him something of that tenderness which we feel for the dead—when vice is recollected with compassion rather than hatred, and scorn melts in forgiveness. Warmed by a common impulse, they contributed munificently, and made immediate preparations for the erection of a new building on the site of the old. Mr. Franklin, who was aware of their movements, entered the hall before they separated. It had been long since he had met his former friends, associated in such a respect-

able body, and a few days before he would have shrunk from their glances, conscious of his degraded condition. Now, strengthened by a solemn resolution, he came among them, and standing in their midst, he begged permission to address them a few moments. He began with the history of his boyhood, and told them his parentage, his flight, his temptation, his perjury, and guilt. His voice was at first faltering, but as he proceeded, it recovered much of its former richness of tone, and when he painted his remorse and despair, his solemn resolutions of amendment, and his trust in Almighty God for strength to fulfil them, his eloquence rose to the most thrilling sublimity.

"For myself," said he, in conclusion, "I would have asked nothing—hoped nothing. I would have buried in the deepest solitude the memory of my shame. But I have children—a daughter worthy of a better fate. For her sake I solicit the restoration of that confidence I have so justly forfeited—the birthright I have so shamefully sold. Low as I have sunk, I feel by the effort I have this moment made, that the indwelling Deity has not yet quite forsaken this polluted temple. I am still capable of being master of myself, and with God's help I will be so. I ask not for the hand of fellowship and friendship. I want it not till time shall have proved the sincerity of my reformation, and purified from defilement the drunkard's name."

Here every hand was simultaneously extended, in token of reviving confidence. Some grasped his in

silence and tears—others fervently bid him God-speed, and promised him encouragement, sympathy and patronage.

The introduction of a household scene—more than a twelve-month after this—will close the history of *The Drunkard's Daughter*. Mr. Franklin was seated by his own fireside, reading; and when he raised his clear, dark eye from the book, and cast it on the domestic group at his side, you could read in his untroubled glance, quietude, self-respect, and confidence. The red signet of intemperance was swept from his noble brow; every look bore witness to his intellectual and moral regeneration. Kate sat near him—she, who, in the hands of God, had been made the instrument of his salvation—bearing on her youthful and lovely person a sad memento of her father's sin. Her left hand lay useless in her lap; its sinews had been contracted by the fires she smothered, when snatching her mother from the flames, and she was destined to carry through life a witness of filial heroism and devotion. But her right hand was clasped in that of Harry Blake, who, sanctioned by parental authority, had sought and received her wedded vows. Kate refused for a long time to assume the sacred duties of a wife, conscious of her impaired usefulness, but Harry pleaded most eloquently, and Harry's father declared that he considered the cause of her dependence as a mark of glory and honor. He had forbidden his son to claim alliance with a degraded name, but Kate had proved, during her sojourn in his dwelling, that a daughter's virtues could redeem a

father's shame. Kate soon learned to be reconciled to a misfortune, which only endeared her the more to the hearts of her friends. She forgot to mourn over her physical dependence, in a father's and husband's devoted love. But, though dependent, she was not passive. She shared in all their intellectual pursuits, read for them, wrote for them, when weary from professional toils, and all that her right hand found to do, "she did diligently and in order." She was their inspiring companion, their modest counsellor, their spiritual friend.

There was one more figure added to this domestic scene. A fair-haired child sat on Mr. Franklin's knee, and twisted her chubby fingers in his still raven hair. It was the child once cradled on the snowy bed, whose blooming cheeks and bright lips corresponded more with the *rose-bud*, than the *snow-drop*, the pet name she bore.

"Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God," or having once yielded to the power of the tempter, that, like the giant slumbering in the lap of Delilah, he cannot break the green withs with which his passions have bound him, and find in after years the shorn locks of his glory clustering once more around his brow.

## Father Hilario, the Catholic.

THE history of Father Hilario is not a tale of fiction, invented to excite the sympathy of the reader. It has its foundation in truth, and needs no false auxiliaries to enhance its affecting interest. Imagination may have slightly embellished some of the minor incidents of his life, but his character stands forth in the simple majesty of reality, and the decorations of fancy, like the light garland thrown round the marble bust, could neither change its noble lineaments nor exalt its classic beauty. The beautiful village of L——, situated in one of the loveliest regions of Spanish Flanders, was the residence of this pure and holy minded Catholic. It was not the place of his nativity, nor has tradition told the land of his birth, or the events of his earlier years. He came to the peaceful valley, commissioned to watch over the souls of the people, and to break to them the bread of Heaven. They received with enthusiasm a pastor, who seemed anointed by the Deity itself for his divine office. There was a silent acknowledgment in every eye that beheld him, that he was a being of superior order, apparently moulded of purer clay, and fitted for nobler purposes than the grosser multitude. At first there was more awe than affection in the feelings he inspired. From his habits of rigorous self denial, his air of deep devotion, his love of hermit solitude, they regarded him rather as a saint than a man. It seemed that he held high and

invisible communion with nature in her secret places, her pathless woods, her virgin bowers, and by the banks of her silent streams. So constant were his solitary excursions, he was called the wanderer of the forest, or sometimes by a holier appellation, the *angel of the grove*. Some children once, urged by the restless curiosity of childhood, traced his path and concealed themselves in a thick cluster of trees, where they could watch his movements unperceived. Scarcely able to repress their glee at the success of the juvenile scheme, their young eyes pierced through the intervening foliage, but mirth was chastened into awe, when they beheld him prostrate on his knees, his locked hands lifted towards heaven, and an expression in his upturned eyes so deep and solemn, as to strike them with superstitious dread. They imagined they saw a halo round his brow, such as encircled the heads of their tutelar saints, and ever afterwards they designated him as the *angel of the grove*. There was one of this young group, on whom the impression made by this glimpse of holiness was ineffaceable. Whenever she bent in prayer by her parent's knee, or at the altar of her God, that kneeling form and upturned brow, invested with such beatific radiance, rose between her and the heaven to which her orisons were addressed, till she associated it with her every idea of that invisible glory which no eye can see and live.

Father Hilario was gradually looked upon as something more approachable and human. The children, who had been terrified by his appearance of unearthly sanctity, became accustomed to the benign expression

of his countenance, as they met him in their daily walks, and, won by the omnipotent charm of goodness, would often forsake their sports, gather round him in his solitude, and listen in breathless silence, while he talked to them of the God who made, and the Saviour who redeemed them. Sometimes with a gush of tenderness, that seemed irrepressible, he would take them in his arms, and weep over them tears as gentle as those which the mother sheds over her newborn babe. They knew not the fountain of his tears, but they had an intuitive conviction that they were holy drops, and like the unconscious flower, which opens its chalice to the dew, each innocent heart drank in their heavenly influence. The children repeated in their homes the words of Father Hilario. They said his voice was sweet as the first notes of the birds in the spring; that his eyes were gentle, and as bright as the sun when he looks over the western hills. Parents followed the steps of their children, and sat at the feet of the man of God, listening with childlike docility, while he pointed out to them that luminous path, which shines up through the darkness of earth, to the regions of perfect day. The aged sought his instructions, and it was a touching sight to see many a head, hoary with the snows of time, bent meekly before him, who convinced them their white locks were a crown of glory, if bowed in penitence and humility at the foot of the cross. Profaneness sealed its bold lips in the presence of a being so immaculate. Scepticism abandoned its doubts, as it looked upon one who seemed the embodied spirit of that religion, at-

tested by the blood of martyred saints, and Christianity itself appeared, arrayed in new and renovated charms.

Was Father Hilario *old*—and were those silver cords which bind us to earth beginning to loosen, that he thus offered himself a living sacrifice unto God? No! he was still in the glowing prime of manhood; and, as if the Creator had willed, in this instance, to unite the perfection of the material and spiritual beauty, he had formed him in his divinest mould. Had the soul been enshrined in a meaner temple, it may be questioned if it had ever attracted so many worshippers, and it is to be feared that some, who came to offer incense to the *Creator*, paid as deep a homage to the *creature*, so nobly adorned. It has been said by one of his cotemporaries, that there never was a more imposing or interesting figure than Father Hilario presented when he stood before the altar in his robes of priesthood, apparently unconscious of every eye, save that which is unseen, his sable hair, shading a brow of marble purity—a brow where devotion sat enthroned, unmolested by the demons of earth-born passion. It was even averred by some, and the remark was uttered with reverence, that they could trace a striking resemblance between the officiating priest and the features of the Master whom he served, whose lineaments were emblazoned by the altar's sacred lights. There was, indeed, a similitude. Like that divine Master, he was destined to bow beneath the cross of human suffering, and to drain to its dregs the cup of agony and humiliation.

Years, however, passed on in this blessed tranquility. We spoke of *one* child, on whom the impression made by the glimpse of Father Hilario in the fervency of prayer, was deep and enduring. That child, then older than her juvenile companions, was now in her girlhood, and was acknowledged, even by her rivals, the fairest flower in the gardens of L——. Her real name has not been preserved in the annals of this history. It matters not—we will call her Leila. The word conveys an idea of loveliness and fragility; and is appropriate to her, who, like the lily of the field, was transcendent in delicacy and sweetness. There was something about this young maiden so different from the usual characteristics of her age, that the eye of the stranger involuntarily rested on her face, and read there the indications of a higher, and perchance, a sadder destiny, than that of her blooming fellows. she was beautiful, but pale as the wild flower to which we just resembled her, save when some sudden emotion passed into her mind, the lightning that plays on the summer's evening cloud, is not more brilliant or evanescent than the colours that then flitted over her cheek. Her eyes—she seemed born to remind one of all that is lovely and perishing—had the deep hue of the mountain violet; and, like their modest emblem, had a natural bending towards the earth; but when they were directed towards heaven, as they oftentimes were, there was a holy illumination diffused over her face, like that which is seen on the countenance of the virgin mother, when she is represented as listening to the songs of the angels. She was an only child, and

her parents, as they saw her in her innocence and beauty, shrinking from the gaities and amusements of youth, and devoting herself to meditation and prayer, felt a kind of prophetic gloom steal over their minds, and, though they never gave utterance to their forebodings, they feared that one so fair and spiritual would not long be suffered to dwell on earth. An unpolluted blossom, the heavenly instructions of Father Hilario, were the sun and dew of her existence. While her more joyous companions followed the impulses of their blithe spirits, she sat, a young disciple, at the feet of this Gamaliel; and when he talked to her of divine things, till her soul kindled into ecstasy, she was unconscious that one spark of earthly fire mingled with the flame that was glowing within. She would have shrunk with horror from the sacrilegious thought of *loving* the anointed of the Lord, the Apostle, the Saint—she believed herself superior to human passion, and when sought in wedlock, for young as she was, she had already inspired in others, what she imagined she was destined never herself to feel; she would answer that “she wished to be the bride of her Redeemer only.” Alas! she knew not that she had placed an earthly idol in the sanctuary of her heart, that temple which she had solemnly dedicated to the living God. But the veil was yet to be rent away, and the temple to become desolate and dim. Before the further development of the story, it will be necessary to introduce two characters, who were conspicuous actors in some of its darkest scenes.

When the inhabitants of L—— were first placed



under the pastoral guardianship of Father Hilario, there were two youths, who had gained "bad eminence" in society, as rebels against its salutary restraints. Murillo, the eldest, had one of those subtle, designing spirits, which loved to work in ambush, to hurl the shafts of mischief from behind some sheltering cloud, and laugh at the consternation they excited. Guido was bold and lawless. He would stand forth in the broad sunshine and commit the most daring depredations, entirely reckless of their consequences. Yet there was a mixture of openness and generosity which often exerted their redeeming influence on his character. Unfortunately, exposed to the evil example of Murillo, he suffered from that moral contagion which the purest and firmest have been unable to resist. The inventive wickedness of the former exercised a mastery over him, which he was ashamed to acknowledge, but to which he involuntarily yielded. About the period to which we allude, they entered by stealth, into the church, and desecrated the altar, by the most unhallowed hieroglyphics; then mingling with the throng who came to worship there, watched with eager scrutiny the effect of their impious ingenuity. Father Hilario felt the insult as a Christian, rather than as a man. He saw every eye directed to the offending characters, and, wishing to give an awful lesson to the perpetrators of such a crime, he came forward, with a majesty he had never before assumed, and in the name of outraged Christianity, commanded the authors of the deed, if within the reach of his voice, to cast themselves before that very altar they had profaned, and,

with tears of repentance, wash out the foul stains they had made. Guido felt as if thunderstruck by the unexpected appeal. The sacrilege of the act, for the first time, glared upon his conscience, and following the impulse of his headstrong and ungovernable nature, he forced his passage through the crowd, threw himself on his knees before Father Hilario, and declared himself one of the offenders. He did not betray his comrade; but Murillo was too notorious not to be known as his accomplice. Murillo, however, asserted his innocence, with a countenance so imperturbable, and a voice so firm, it was almost impossible to doubt his truth. When the boys next encountered each other on the village green, Murillo assailed the penitent with every expression of scorn and indignation.

"You have not the spirit of a man in you," he exclaimed, "pitiful coward that you are, to be frightened by the threats of a canting priest. You have wit enough in your brains for the invention of mischief, but not courage enough in your soul to carry it into execution."

"I had rather be a coward than a liar," retorted Guido, contemptuously. "I tell you to your face, Murillo, you are both; and I desire no more fellowship with one whom I despise." He turned his back as he spoke, and walked several paces from the exasperated Murillo, who pursued him with bitter imprecations.

"You are a base-born wretch, and you know it," cried Murillo, "deny it if you can—resent it if you dare."



Guido felt the taunt to his heart's core. There was a mystery attending his birth, which made his claim to legitimacy somewhat doubtful; but, as his mother had expiated her frailty with her life, the shade that darkened her fame did not long obscure the opening manhood of her son. There were few who were unfeeling enough to stigmatize, in his presence, the parent who was now beyond the reach of human obloquy and shame. With flashing eyes and boiling blood, Guido turned upon the insulter, and, seizing a stone which unfortunately lay within his reach, he dashed it into his face. Murillo fell to the ground apparently lifeless, while the blood issued in torrents from his wounded head. Guido stood over him, aghast at the consequences of his rashness. He believed himself a murderer, and gazed in agony of remorse and horror upon the pale, bleeding form extended before him. The wound, however, did not prove mortal. After suffering excruciating tortures, and lingering long in a state of painful debility, he was at last restored to his wonted vigour. But one of his eyes—and they were singularly bright—was extinguished for ever, and a terrible scar on the temple disfigured the beauty of a face, which, in spite of the absence of every moral charm, was once eminently handsome. It may well be believed that Murillo, with his vindictive and irascible temper, never, in his heart, forgave the one who had thus marred his features, and cheated them "of their fair proportions." He had been particularly vain of the fiery brilliancy of his eyes, and he felt that the glory of his countenance was departed, and a blighting mark set upon him

to make him an object of pity or derision to a gazing world. As the young tree, riven by the lightning's stroke, stands scathed and barren in the midst of abounding verdure, he remained gloomy and dark in the social band, the few generous affections with which nature had gifted him, blasted by the withering consciousness of personal deformity. Guido, whose better feelings had been awakened by the solemn admonitions of Father Hilario, and whose remorse for the injury he had inflicted was keen as the resentment that dictated the act, and lasting as its consequences, exerted every energy and every art to soften the hatred of Murillo, and indemnify him for the wrong he had done, but in vain—years passed on, still Murillo's solitary eye scowled indignantly by the grave of its fellow whenever it turned upon the unfortunate Guido. Another circumstance served to widen the chasm which separated them. While they were advancing deeper into manhood, the juvenile charms of Leila were assuming the more seductive graces of womanhood, and the hearts of both acknowledged her inspiration. There was nothing strange in this. It would seem as natural to love, nay, as impossible *not* to love such a being as Leila, as to look upon a rose in the dewy freshness of its bloom, without wishing to inhale its fragrance and gather it from its bower. Her perfect unconsciousness of her own loveliness, her indifference to admiration, the elevation and sanctity of her character, rendered it difficult for one to address her in the language of earthly passion. But Guido emboldened

himself to declare the homage she inspired, though he anticipated the denial she gave.

"I would devote myself to God," she answered; and she looked so heavenly when she uttered the words, he almost convinced himself he had a second time been guilty of profaneness, in aspiring to one so saintlike and pure. As for Murillo, his love partook of all that was dark and fierce in a character, whose passions were strong and untameable as the elements. Once, in a moment of uncontrollable excitement, he revealed to her the strength and depth of emotions he had long smothered in his breast, where they burned with the intenseness of nature's central fires. She shrunk from him in terror she had not the power to conceal, and his proud heart chafed almost to madness in his bosom. He remembered the promise of his boyhood, before any defacing touch had swept out the lines of symmetry and beauty, and he cursed Guido in his secret soul, as the author of his misery and degradation.

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It was the depth of summer. Every thing wore that aspect of almost oppressive magnificence and intensity of hue peculiar to the season, which elicits the latent glories of nature, while it deadens the strength and energy of man. The earth began to pant for one of those liberal showers, which come down with such life-giving influence, on the dry and thirsty plain. The excessive brightness of the foliage gradually waned, the thick leaves drooped, and hung languidly from the branches, as if fainting for the salutary moisture of the skies, while the eye, dazzled and

wearied by the continuous sunshine, watched anxiously the faintest shadow that floated over the glowing horizon, till every glance beamed prayer, that the blessing of the rain and the dew might be borne within its bosom. Then welcome was the forest depth, the shadow of the rock, in the sultry land. Leila wandered through the solitudes she loved. From her childhood she had been accustomed to solitary rambles, and her parents, with indulgent tenderness, allowed no restraint to be imposed upon her inclinations, confiding in the purity of their origin. Mid the loneliness of nature, she held deep and unwitnessed intercourse with the mysteries of her own heart, but its language was inexplicable to her simplicity. She could not define the vague, restless consciousness of guilt which mingled with her secret devotions, weighed down its spirit in its upward flight, and spread a dimness over all her dreams of heaven.

She sat in the coolness of one of her favourite retreats, unconscious in the shadows that surrounded her, of the heavy cloud that was rising, darkening and rapidly diffusing itself over the sky, till a faint flash of lightning, quivering through the gloom, succeeded by a low, sullen roar of distant thunder, warned her that the prayer of the husbandman was about to be answered, and a painful feeling of her personal apprehension accompanied the conviction, when she thought of her lonely and unprotected situation. She suffered unconquerable terrors in a thunder storm. It was one of those constitutional

weaknesses which no mental energy could overcome. When a child, she believed this awful herald of elemental wrath was the voice of the Ancient of Days, proclaiming his omnipotent mandates to a hushed and trembling world; she associated it with the mountain that burned with unconsuming flame, with all the most terrible manifestations of Almighty power; and though, in after years, she learned the sublime mysteries of nature, she never forgot the impressions of her childhood. Almost powerless from dread, she endeavoured to find her homeward path, while the storm approached with a rapidity and violence, which might have shaken nerves less exquisitely sensitive than hers. The lightning no longer ran in dazzling chains, on the edge of the sky, but spread in bannered pomp over the firmament, and the thunder came on, in gathering peals, louder, deeper, nearer, till the trees of the forest shook in their ancient brotherhood, and the coeval rocks reverberated fearfully with the sound.

Leila thought of the grove which was consecrated in her mind by the image of Father Hilario, which even now might be hallowed by his presence, and though bewildered by fear, she sought it as a *city of shelter*, to which she might fly and live. She saw the thick vine wreaths, which hung in unpruned luxuriance over one of the most lovely and sequestered arbours nature ever arched in the wilderness, for the repose and security of man. She reached the entrance, and glancing through the lattice-work, woven by the interlacing tendrils, was arrested there by the

object which met her gaze. The same figure which, years before, had beamed on her sight, like an angel of peace, now knelt in the centre of the grotto, calm amidst the warring elements, absorbed in adoration and prayer, while the lightning as it flashed through the foliage, played around his uplifted brow, in wreaths of living glory. Leila trembled as she gazed—she dared not to disturb his sublime confidence with her wild, undisciplined terrors; but, faint with fatigue, dread, and a thousand undefined emotions, she leaned against the branches, with a sigh, heavy, as irrepressible. Father Hilario heard that low sound, though apparently insensible to the thunder's crash. No expression of human suffering ever fell unheeded on *his* ear, and, turning to the direction from whence it proceeded, he saw his beloved disciple, standing exhausted and agitated before him—the deathlike paleness of fear triumphing on her cheeks over the lilies of nature. With an involuntary impulse of tenderness and compassion, he extended his arms towards her, and Leila sunk into their protecting fold, with a feeling like that with which we may suppose the wounded dove seeks the sheltering down of its mother's wings.

Father Hilario endeavored, with the most persuasive gentleness, to infuse into her mind the composure and confidence, arising from faith in that Being who makes the mightiest elements his vassals, and whose mercy is commensurate to his power. He recalled to her those many instances on holy record, where the faithful had been preserved, and innocence left unharmed,

while the most terrible ministers of God's vengeance were dealing out destruction to the rebellious and polluted. While he was yet speaking, an electrifying flash illuminated the grove—the thunder burst in one magnificent pæan over the forest, and the tall tree, beneath whose boughs the grotto was woven, stood with its trunk shivered and scathed, though its green summit seemed still unconscious of the desolation that awaited it. The large rain-drops now plashed on the leaves, the wind bowed and twisted the branches, as if anxious to open a passage for the shower to the panting bosom of the earth. It came down in deluging torrents. Their canopy of leaves no longer sheltered them, the vine was rent, the frail twigs scattered on the blast, which every moment swept with increasing violence over Father Hilario and his now almost helpless charge. He vainly endeavored to shield her from its fury, by wrapping his arms around her and pressing her closer and closer to a heart which, free from the tumults of earthly passion, might well become the resting-place of innocence and beauty. Even in that hour of grandeur and horror, when the death-bolts where every where hissing through the clouds, Leila felt a glow of happiness pervading her being, which triumphed over the effects of the chilling wind and drenching rain—yet no emotion agitated her spotless breast, which an incarnate angel might not have felt, and gloried in acknowledging. It seemed to her that while Omnipotence was bowing the heavens, and coming down in all its glory and majesty, almost annihilating her very existence with awe, she beheld in the

mild, religious eyes, that were looking down into her soul, a beam of heaven's own love and mercy, a blessed assurance that man is never forgotten by the Almighty, and that the low prayer of faith rises with acceptance to his ear, high above the din and wailing of the tempest.

There was one eye which witnessed this scene—it was a *solitary* one—and the worst passions of which our nature is capable, were concentrated in its rays. Murillo had followed the steps of Leila. He marked the coming storm, and hastened to her accustomed haunts, believing that she would willingly seek a refuge from its violence, even in his sheltering arms. Not finding the object of his search, he continued his pursuit in doubt and alarm, till he discovered the place of her retreat, and saw, himself unseen, all which we have just described. He remained rooted to the spot by a kind of fascination, which he had not the power to dispel. The truth was revealed to him at once—she loved him—*she*, this vestal beauty, who seemed surrounded by an atmosphere of spherul, unapproachable light, she loved this heaven-dedicated mortal with all the ardour of woman's first, unblighted affection. He read it in every expression of her upturned eye, in the doubtful colour that momentarily dyed her cheek, then left it stainless in its native whiteness. He felt maddened by this discovery. He had always looked upon Guido, whom he had sworn to hate, as a rival, and feared his success; but Father Hilario, a man whose age so much transcended hers, whose profession excluded him from the world's sympathies

—it was incredible. He could not, however, but acknowledge to himself, that if Father Hilario had passed the morning of youth, time had not cast one shade over the meridian of his manhood, and while he gazed upon him, as he knelt in the storm, thus tenderly supporting and cherishing the only being who had ever kindled a sentiment of love in his own dark bosom, he was forced to confess, that man never had a nobler representative.

It is a bootless and unprofitable task, that of attempting to describe the unfathomable hell of a human heart, delivered up to the unresisted mastery of its own evil passions. It is on the *consequences* of crime that the moralist rests his hope. These, called up by the wizard wand of conscience, glide and glide before the eyes of the pale delinquent, like the accusing phantoms, in the night vision of the guilty and aspiring Thane.

The storm subsided—the heavy clouds rolled towards the eastern horizon, and the covenant token of mercy arched its deepening radiance on the retiring vapours. Father Hilario pointed out to Leila this glorious reflection of the Creator's smile, and dwelt upon that memorable era, when it first bent in beauty over the sinking waters of the deluge. Every object in their homeward path elicited from him a lesson of gratitude and love. Leila listened, but not to the rich melodies of nature, which were now breathing and gushing around them, in the music of waters, the symphony of birds, and the mellow intonations of the distant thunder, that rolled at intervals its organ-notes

on the gale. She heard but one sound in the magnificent chorus—the voice of Father Hilario.

Had Murillo never stolen, like a serpent as he was, to that bower of shelter, and witnessed emotions, whose purity, the baseness and corruption of his nature could never conceive, and which he imagined partook of the unholy ardour of his own feelings, her innocent heart would perhaps never have known the pangs of self-upbraiding, which afterwards so cruelly martyred its peace. He watched his opportunity of meeting her alone. The spell which had enthralled him in her presence was now dissolved. He loved her still, but he no longer feared; for the secret of which he was the master, placed her more upon a level with himself, and brought her down from that high mount of holiness, upon which his imagination had exalted her. He was resolved to humble her by accusing her to her face of the sacrilege of which she was guilty.

"Yes, Leila," cried he, stung by the cold, averted air with which she met his proffered civilities, "I know it all. It is not that your heart is wedded to heaven, that you turn from the gaities of youth, and scorn the vows of the young and the brave. You love Father Hilario. You cannot, you dare not deny it. All that you have inspired in me, false girl, you feel for him. I saw you, Leila, when you thought no eye but his was on you, folded to his bosom, in the solitude of the grove, the crimson of passion glowing on your cheek, and its lightnings, brilliant as those

which illuminated the sky, kindling in your eyes. In vain"—

He paused, for he was terrified by the effect of his words; she stood as if smitten by some avenging angel. Every drop of blood seemed to have deserted its wonted channel, for it is scarcely exaggerated to say, that her face and lips were white as marble, and they looked as deadly cold; while her eyes, which darkened in their intensity, were riveted on his, with a look of wild supplication, which would have melted a less indurated heart. The truth burst upon her like a thunderbolt, and it crushed her to the earth. Had it been whispered her in the dim shadows of night, by a mother's gentle voice, it would have come over her, even then, with a blasting power, but to have it break upon her thus—the unfortunate girl sank down upon the fragment of a rock, near the spot where they stood, and, covering her face with her hands, wept in agony. Murillo's terror subsided at the sight of her tears, and he went on remorsefully widening the wound he had made.

"Think not," he continued, "no longer to deceive the world. It shall know the latent fire which burns beneath the ice of sanctity, with which thou hast encircled thyself. Father Hilario, too! Vile wolf, who has clothed himself in shepherd's garb!"—

"Forbear!" almost shrieked Leila, at these words; "oh! never by thought, or word, or look"—she stopped despairingly, she knew not in what language to vindicate the character of Father Hilario from the charges of his adversary. She felt that she was in his

power, and casting herself on her knees before him, she supplicated for mercy. "You may destroy me. Murillo, *I* merit it. I have deceived myself and the world; *I* am guilty beyond forgiveness; but Father Hilario—he lives only for the God who has anointed him. Oh! if through me he should suffer"—her joined hands and beseeching eyes finished what her bloodless lips in vain endeavoured to articulate. Murillo gazed with malignant triumph upon his victim. He had wrapped his coil around her, and she might seek, with unavailing struggles, to extricate herself from the folds. But whatever was his purpose he chose to dissemble, and raising her, whom he had so deeply humiliated, from the ground, he assured her that her secret should be safe in his possession, and her feeling sacred in his eyes. He solicited her pardon for the extravagancies to which love and jealousy had urged him, in terms so mild and submissive, and begged to be admitted to her friendship and sympathy, with such lowly deference, it is not strange that he deceived one so guileless and confiding.

He left her—left the dart to rankle where he threw it and—it *did* rankle. Never more did she meet with an untroubled eye, the calm and heavenly glance of Father Hilario. No longer did she sit at his feet with the sweet docility of childhood, the deep joy of her soul mirrored on her brow. Father Hilario was grieved at her estrangement; he feared that the flower he had so carefully reared for Paradise was about to lavish its bloom and its fragrance on the perishing things of this world; but when he gently reproved,



her for her coolness, she would only turn from him silently and wept. Unhappy Leila! the fairest and purest of earth are oft devoted to the saddest destiny; and what doom more sad than to be condemned to the conviction that the inspirations of virtue and sensibility are sacrilege and guilt?

Father Hilario sat one evening, as he was wont to do, in a chamber which he had consecrated to devotion, surrounded by the authors he loved, and the saints whom he adored. Already the waning sun diffused that golden, religious light through the apartment, which falls with such soothing, solemnizing influence on the soul of the devotee. He sat in spiritual abstraction, an illuminated missal open before him, and the holy emblem of his faith placed so as to receive the gilding of the western rays. The sound of hasty footsteps, and the confused murmur of voices approaching this hitherto unmolested retreat, roused him from his devout meditations. The door was violently thrown open, and a party of citizens, whose looks were indicative of horror and alarm, entered the apartment.

"What means this tumult?" exclaimed Father Hilario; and he feared some calamitous event had filled the village with consternation. The man who seemed to be the leader of the group, advanced with an air of mingled authority and trepidation, and laying his hand on the shoulder of Father Hilario, addressed him in the startling words: "You are our prisoner, Father Hilario. We arrest you by order of the chief magistrate."

"Me! your minister?" exclaimed Father Hilario, in dignified yet sorrowful amazement. "Of what am I accused?"

"Of *murder*!" cried the officer, and the words were muttered by the rest of the party, in tones that seemed to be afraid of their own echoes. Father Hilario looked steadfastly on the faces of each to see if he were not surrounded by a band of maniacs. With added solemnity he repeated the question, and received the same awful reply. A dead silence succeeded this reiteration, when, gathering himself up with indescribable majesty, he commanded them to depart. The indignation of outraged manhood towered over the long-suffering meekness of Christianity.

"Ye know me!" he cried, and his usual mild voice was fearful in its power. "Ye know that I am not a man of blood. I have toiled, wept, and prayed for your salvation. The delegate of my divine Master, I have broken for you, with unpolluted hands, the bread of life. I have followed your paths in sickness and sorrow, binding up the wounds of human suffering, lifting the bruised reed, and holding the lamp of faith over the valley of death. I have—but oh! perverse generation, is this your return?" He stopped, overpowered by the depth of his emotion, while tears, which only agony could have drawn forth, gushed from his eyes. The men looked at each other as if in shame and fear, for the errand they had undertaken. The officer said, "it is a most painful task, which had devolved upon him, but that duty was imperative, and must be obeyed." "Who is my accu-



ser?" demanded the victim. "I," answered a deep voice from behind, and Murillo advanced in front of the group. His face was cold and calm, and his manner firm and self-possessed. He spoke as a man conscious of the import of his words, and ready to meet their consequences. "I accuse thee of the murder of Guido. *I saw the deed. I saw the dagger in his bloody breast. Cold on the earth he lies. I accuse thee, in the face of God and of man, as the perpetrator of the crime.*" While Murillo was speaking, Father Hilario resumed his composure, though a deeper shade of solemnity settled on his brow. "Search," cried he, "for the proofs of your accusation. Every recess is open to your scrutiny."

He unfolded the doors to their examination; but what words can speak the consternation of Father Hilario, when, as they passed into the ante-chamber, they lifted his surplice, which he had left there as was his custom when he retired to the inner apartment, and found it all dabbled with blood; even the print of gory fingers, *damning proof* of the recent death-struggle, was visible on its ample folds. A dagger, too, clotted with fresh blood gouts, fell to the floor, as the officer of justice displayed the ensanguined raiment, and there it lay "in form and shape as palpable" as the air drawn dagger, which gleamed before the eyes of the Scottish regicide. Father Hilario staggered back against the wall, his ashy lips quivering with unutterable horror, his hair actually recoiling from his brow, as if instinct with the spirit within. It was a scene which an Angelo would have trembled

with ecstasy to behold—and which he would have fixed upon his canvas in imperishable colours. There was a look of ghastly excitement on every face, save *one*, such as is seen at the midnight conflagration, when the pallidness of terror is lighted up with an unearthly glare, by the flaming element around. That face was still and cold in its expression—if there was one feeling predominant over another, it seemed to be scorn, and a slight curl of the lip, turned towards Father Hilario, said, as plain as words could utter it, "thou hypocrite!" Father Hilario marked it not. *His* eyes were directed towards heaven—*his* hands folded on his breast, and those present never forgot the manner in which he ejaculated the most affecting appeal on holy record—"Oh! my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

I have undertaken the task, and, however painful, I must not shrink from its fulfilment; then let not the moralist upbraid me, for introducing an event which the infidel might exultingly cite, as proof that no superintending Providence watched over the destinies of man. But, who are those who stand around the throne of God, clothed with robes of glory, and immortal crowns upon their brows? They who have travelled with bleeding feet through the briers and thorns of human suffering, mid darkness, and tribulation, and despair—the pilgrims of sorrow, that they may be the inheritors of immortality. Father Hilario had walked uncontaminated through a path where the flowers of love and the incense of adulation were dangerously blended; he was now to pass through the

refiner's fire, that the fine gold might be purified from the dross of this world's pollution. I will not linger on scenes so revolting. He surrendered himself into the hands of the magistrate, and in one of those cells vaulted for the reception of human guilt, one of the best and purest of God's creation, awaited the trial for life or death. The inhabitants of the village trembled and clustered together, as when the shock of an earthquake is felt, claiming closer brotherhood in the general calamity. They loudly proclaimed his innocence; they protested against his arrest as an act of sacrilege; they would have burst his prison doors to redeem him, but he would not permit the laws of his country to be violated. He exhorted them to forbearance, and prayed them to leave the event in the hands of the Almighty. I dare not speak of what Leila suffered. From the moment she heard the awful tidings, she sat speechless as a statue; the look of wild consternation, with which she first listened, imprinted on her face, as if it had been chiselled in the marble she resembled. Could she but have wept!—but hers was not common woe—even maternal tenderness could not fathom its depth. Tears!—horror had frozen their fountain.

The day of trial came; a day never forgotten in the annals of the village of L—. The hall of justice was filled almost to suffocation. Every countenance was flushed with that expression of high-wrought excitement, which extraordinary and awful events are calculated to produce; and it is a strange, inexplicable paradox of the human heart, that, however ap-

palling may be those events, there is something of *pleasure* in the intensity of feeling they call forth. When Father Hilario appeared, there was a murmur through the crowd, like the hushing of autumnal winds, succeeded by the stillness of awe and expectation. His cheek was wan, his eye solemn, yet serene, and his hair hung neglected on his temples, as if heavy with the dungeon's dampness. There was a heaving of the crowd, as he passed through, intimating the restless elements restrained in its bosom. Father Hilario—the revered, the beloved—the almost worshipped—stood arraigned before the bar of his country, accused of the blood of his fellow man. Where was his accuser? There—conspicuous amidst the throng, towered the stately form of Murillo. Men looked upon him askance, unwilling to fix a steady gaze on him, who had armed the avenging laws against one whom, in spite of the blood-stained robe and dagger, they *felt* must be innocent. Murillo knew the part before him, and he was eloquent. His voice, when he chose to modulate it, had something peculiarly insinuating in its tones. He began so low, that the people were obliged to bend forward earnestly to hear his articulation. These low sounds, however, were only the prelude to a burst of impassioned eloquence. He described the scene which he had witnessed—the wild shriek, which, piercing the air, startled him in his evening walk; the form of Guido sinking beneath the death steel of the anointed assassin. He painted, with graphic power, the flight of Father Hilario; the concealing of the dagger in his bosom, the gathering

up of his robe to hide the bloody stains; every thing was minutely marked. The voiceless witnesses, that robe and dagger, were produced and appealed to, almost as powerfully as the dumb wounds of Cæsar, by the artful and eloquent Antony. He next enlarged upon the motives of the deed. With the subtlety of a fiend, he stole into the ears of his auditors, throwing out dark hints of the resistless influence of jealousy, sweeping down the landmarks of reason, honour, and religion. Father Hilario knew that Guido was his rival. Then, seeing his audience start, as if electrified at the disclosure, he pursued his advantage, and painted the scene in the arbour, during the awful warfare of nature. He saw a flush of indescribable emotion in Father Hilario's face, and it redoubled his energy. He even disclosed, though with apparent grief and reluctance, the despair and remorse with which the ill-fated girl had confessed her sacrilegious passion. He closed with an adjuration to religion and humanity, to vindicate their violated laws, by hurling a bolt "red with uncommon wrath," on the vile impostor, who had clothed himself in white and fleecy robes, to despoil innocence of its bloom, and manhood of the free gift of life.

A death-like silence prevailed after the accuser had ceased to speak, first broken by a deep, convulsive sob. The mourner sat in a remote corner of the hall, and his face was bowed on his joined hands. It was the father of Leila, who had heard all that had been uttered of his child, without the power to refute the daring charge. The painful situation to which the

unhappy girl was reduced, was a dreadful commentary upon the words of Murillo. With all the anguish of a father, he felt that she was lost to him, and the cause of her fading and despair burst upon him at once, with horrible reality. The father's sobs pleaded more powerfully against Father Hilario than the laboured eloquence of Murillo.

At last Father Hilario rose, and so great was the excitement of the audience, that almost all who were present rose simultaneously. His manner had lost much of its serene composure, his countenance was agitated, and a flush of hectic brightness burned on his pallid cheek. He had resigned himself to his own fate, but now the destiny of another was identified with his. He felt that his lonely arm might vainly endeavour to interpose a barrier between them and the gathered storm.

"I have naught," said he, "to offer against the black charges alleged against me, but the evidence of a stainless life; a life whose best and holiest energies have been exerted in your behalf. I am innocent—God knows I am innocent—but the powers of darkness are leagued for my destruction, and I am left alone to wrestle with their wrath. I will not plead for myself, but in behalf of insulted purity, I will lift up my voice, till it meet an answer in the skies. I speak of that innocent being, whom I sheltered in these paternal arms, from the fury of the desolating tempest. I knew not that any eye, save the all-seeing one, beheld the meeting, but never has one thought warmed

my breast for her, that angels might not sanction, and omniscient holiness approve. I have loved her as a young disciple of our common Lord, as a most precious lamb of the flock of Israel, whom my pastoral hand has led through the green fields, and by the deep waters of eternal life. She needs no vindication; ye know that she is pure. Oh! could the unfortunate youth, whose life blood dyes yon sacerdotal robe, now rend the cerements of his voiceless grave, enter this crowded hall, and point his mouldering finger at the undetected murderer—the bold accuser of unarmoured innocence would call upon the mountains and the rocks to cover him from the justice of man, and the vengeance of God. But, though no mortal power can bring him before this earthly bar, there is a tribunal, impartial and eternal, where he now pleads, where he will forever plead, against the guilty wretch, who has dared to break the most awful canons of the living God. Oh! ye deluded people!" continued he, extending his apostolic hands towards them; "I weep not for myself, but for you. I yearn not for life. I had hoped to have breathed out my soul on the natural pillow of decay, soothed by the voice of tenderness, and hallowed by the tears of regret; but to go down to an ignominious grave, and leave a dark, dishonoured memory!—yet it is meet that I suffer. The Almighty wills that I should, or he might rend the heavens for my deliverance, and send down armies of angels to shield me from your rage. I should rather glory in my martyrdom, as the disciple of Him, in whose

name I have lived, in whose faith I will triumphantly die, who wore the crown of agony, and bore the cross of shame. For you, if my condemnation is sealed, the time will come when the days will roll in sorrow and gloom over your heads, the nights will come on in the *blackness of darkness*, ye will seek for comfort and ye will not find it, for the weight of innocent blood will be on your souls."

There was a sudden parting in the crowd—those who were clustered round the gate fell back, as if by irresistible impulse, and an apparition glided through the dividing throng, which might well be taken as a messenger from another world. Pale, white as a death-shroud, her neglected locks floating around her, wild as the tendrils of the forest vine, and her eyes beaming with intense and wandering fires, she rushed forward, regardless of every object, save one, and threw her arms around Father Hilario, with a cry of such piercing anguish, as thrilled through every nerve of her auditors. Need I say, that it was the unfortunate Leila, who, roused from the lethargy of despair, and supported by the unnatural strength of madness, had thus forced her desperate way in the hope of dying with him she loved? As Father Hilario looked upon this sweet, blighted flower of his fondest earthly affections, lying in drooping, dying loveliness on his bosom, he forgot everything but her tenderness and devotion, and closing his arms around her, "tears such as angels shed" baptized her spotless face. In vain did her father, with a breaking heart, strive to release her from the

embrace she had sought. She clung to Father Hilario with an energy that seemed supernatural, a clasp that was almost indissoluble, till, at length, exhausted and apparently expiring, she relaxed her hold, and was borne by her father to his now desolate home. Father Hilario gazed after her till the last glimpse of her figure was lost, then covering his face with his hands, his Creator only saw and knew the passing agony of that moment.

The sequel of this trial must have been anticipated, from some dark intimations of his fate, at the commencement of the narrative. The unconscious Leila had sealed, by her presence, the doom of him she would have died to save. Her desperation and love were fatal corroborations of the truth of Murillo's testimony. Father Hilario returned to his cell, a condemned man; condemned to expiate at the *stake*, the double crime of sacrilege and murder; but it is recorded that the judges, who were men of stern, unbending character, wept as they uttered the sentence, and the people sobbed and groaned audibly as they heard it. \* \* \* \*

At length the day dawned which was marked for the consummation of the dreadful decree. It was one of painful, sickening brightness. Nature had clothed herself in her most magnificent robes, and assumed her fairest smile, as if to mock the crimes and sufferings of man. On a gradual eminence, covered with living green, o'ercanopied with dazzling sapphire, was seen the funeral pile of the victim. A multitude was stretched widely, darkly around it, and heav-

ing heavily, mournfully on the air, the death-bell rolled its long, deep echoing knell, saddest of all earthly sounds. There was something awful in the stillness of this vast multitude—even more than its wild rush and commotion, when Father Hilario was led forth to the fatal pile. He passed along, clad in white victim robes, the crucifix suspended on his bosom, his face placid as the lake, on which the moonbeams untrembling repose. Every trace of human emotion had vanished. He had been on the mount of prayer, and the reflection of the invisible glory was still bright on his brow. If ever mortal, in the expression of saint-like humanity, patience, mildness and majesty, approached the similitude of the divine sufferer, it was Father Hilario. He passed along to the sound of the mournful bell, through the audible lamentations of the crowd, where man in his strength, woman in her sensibility, and childhood in its helplessness and timidity, were strangely and inexplicably blended. The victim reached the place of sacrifice. He turned around, to take in, for the last time, the glories of creation; then bending his eyes on the multitude, he extended his arms, in benediction over them. He spoke, and that voice, so sweet and solemn, rose through the deepening murmurs, like the diapason of an organ, mid the wailings of a storm.

"Ye beloved flock, farewell! To that Almighty Shepherd, who laid down his life for your salvation, with prayers and blessings, I commit you. Again I say, weep not for me. Rejoice rather, that ye see me die an innocent, a triumphant martyr. Think, when

the fiery wrath encircles my brow, how soon it will be converted into a crown of glory. Even now methinks I see through the opening heavens, the wheels of the descending cherubim."—He looked up, as he spoke, with a countenance of inspiration, and kneeling down exclaimed, with the adoring prophet, "My Father, my Father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." The awe-struck crowd gazed up into the unshadowed vault, almost believing to witness the same miracle of divine love, wrought in behalf of the sainted victim. But they beheld no burning car rolling through the arch of heaven—no wings of angels parted its resplendent blue. They looked down to earth, and saw Father Hilario embracing the fatal stake. One flash of the kindling pyre, and a wild, simultaneous shriek rent the air. Higher and higher rose the gathering blaze; still, through the winding sheet of flame, glimpses were seen of that glorious form, crowned with the awful pomp of martyrdom. Deeper and deeper closed the fiery folds, then paler waxed the wasting splendour, till at last naught but the smoke of the holocaust went up to heaven.

Twice the sun rose and set over the scene of sacrifice. The silence of death brooded over the valley. Again the bell swelled in funeral harmony on the melancholy air, while a long procession darkened the church-yard and closed around a solitary grave. At the head of that grave appeared the figure of a grief-stricken man. There was such an expression of unspeakable woe and humiliation in his countenance,

that even sympathy turned away, self-rebuked, for having looked at sorrow too sacred for observation. It was the broken-hearted father of Leila. It was around *her* grave that mournful throng was gathering. But why were no white-robed maidens there, to perform the customary rite, and scatter the perishing wreath, emblem of fragility and beauty, over one who was the fairest of their band? A dark spot had been discovered in the whiteness of the lily's chalice, and the flowers of its tribe were not permitted to shed their mourning sweetness over its decay. The appalling stillness which precedes the sound most agonizing to the mourner's ear, the fall of the covering mould, pervaded the scene. The father lay prostrate on the earth, and the throes which shook his frame, were fearful to behold. Some thought, as they gazed on his convulsive pangs, there could be no grief like *his*; but they remembered her who was left in the forsaken home. The mother's sorrow was not for man to witness. When, at length, that damp, heavy, doleful sound, the last knell of mortality, fell startlingly on the ear, Murillo, who had stood in statue-like immobility, somewhat aloof from the general throng, rushed wildly forward, and stepping on the very brink of the grave, exclaimed, in a voice which might rend the marble slumbers of death:

"Away!—she shall not go down unhonoured and unavenged. She's mine—I bought her—with my soul's price I bought her—the covenant is written in blood, and sealed with the flames of martyrdom. Yes," he continued, his fiery eyes flashing with into-



lerable brightness; "yes! ye blind judges, tremble, for ye have need. Ye have condemned an angel of light upon the testimony of a fiend. Ye have done that, which ye would give worlds upon worlds to redeem. Behold in *me* the assassin of Guido, the murderer of Father Hilario, the destroyer of Leila. I execrated Guido, for he made me a branded Cain among my fellow men. I hated Father Hilario, for Leila *loved* him; and *I*, an alien from mankind, lived but to worship *her*. She loved him, but with a love as pure as that which warms the burning cherubim—I stole the robes of holiness, and wrought beneath their folds the deed of hell. The Prince of darkness was with me, and promised me her, who now lies cold in the bed my gory hands have made. Here, in the presence of death, and the prospect of judgment, in the name of that dreadful Deity I have defied, I proclaim the innocence of my victims, your own guilt and mine. Live on, if ye will, weighed down with the curse of guiltless blood upon your souls; for me, I *lived* to destroy—I *die* to avenge." Before an arm could be lifted to avert the deed, he had drawn a dagger from his vest, and plunging it in his bosom, fell a bleeding, but unavailing sacrifice to the ashes of Leila.

### The Tempted.

"I DON'T believe brother will be here to-night—that I don't," said little Mary Norwood, rubbing her eyes that winked and ached from gazing so long from the window. "I won't love him if he don't; such a pretty bright night too."

"You had better go to bed, my child," said Mrs. Norwood, smoothing down her wayward ringlets, "you are getting very sleepy, and Augustus will not be here a minute sooner from your watching."

"No, but I want to see my doll he's going to bring me, and besides I am not a bit sleepy, mother,"—and she opened her round blue eyes to their widest limits, to prove the truth of her assertion.

"I don't believe Augustus would know Mary if he saw her any where else," said Harriet Norwood, looking lovingly on her little sister, "she has grown so much, and altered too, within the last two years."

"He would know those big blue eyes of hers any where," answered her mother, smiling, "especially when she puts on that round look, as he used to call it. I hope *he* will not be changed, but bring back the same sunny countenance and ingenuous smile, that distinguished his face from a thousand. He *will*, if he has preserved the sunshine of his heart undimmed, and its fountains pure from corruption. There are so many temptations in a large city, I have sometimes trembled for him, considering his youth,



and the proneness of the human heart to wander from the strait and narrow path into the wide road that leads to ruin."

"Oh, mother," said Harriet warmly, "I know he is the same. Such an affectionate disposition and ardent feelings as his, united with such upright principles and such high sense of honour, could never change so soon. I would scarcely be afraid to stake my life on his uncorrupted integrity."

"Rose Somers herself could not have defended him with more warmth," replied Mrs. Norwood, smiling at Harriet's glowing cheek and earnest countenance, "but you little know a mother's heart if you think there is not as eloquent an advocate in his behalf pleading in my breast as yours."

"Hark!" exclaimed little Mary, jumping up eagerly and running again to the window, "I hear bells—how sweet they jingle!—it's brother, I know."

Mrs. Norwood and Harriet followed the rapid footsteps of Mary, and gazed abroad on the pure expanse of snow, that, scarcely yet tracked by the footsteps of man, shone white and dazzling in the moonlight. A light sheet had fallen during the latter part of the day, and the sun, to Mary's bitter grief, had gone down in clouds; but after awhile the moon was seen palely struggling through them, then lining and edging them with brightening silver, till at length they melted in her deepening radiance, and she looked down, unveiled and glorious, on one of the most beautiful scenes of the universe—a wide landscape covered with smooth, undrifted snow, that reflected its

white lustre back through the cold still air—and looked so sweet and pure, one might forget in gazing that sin or sorrow had ever marred so fair a world. Mary's quick ear had not deceived her—the merry jingling of bells was distinctly heard; they rung faster and faster, nearer and nearer—a sleigh covered with sweeping buffalo skins came dashing up to the door, a young man sprang out, and was welcomed at the threshold by a three-fold embrace, and smiles and tears mingled together like an April shower, and still those clasping arms were around him when he stood by the blazing hearth, whose ruddy light contrasted beautifully with the cold splendour abroad.

"How well you look, Augustus!" said his mother, as soon as she could speak, for deep joy is never loquacious.

"And you too, dear mother; you never looked so young; and what shall I say of little Mary here, whom I left no higher than my knee?"

"Ain't I grown tall, brother?" cried she, standing on tip-toe, and trying to stretch out her little short, fat neck.

"Yes," said he, laughing, and lifting her in his arms as he spoke, "and those round blue eyes have the same particular look of astonishment I always loved to excite."

He pressed her warm, rosy cheek against his cold one, while his mother warmed his chilled hands in hers, and Harriet took off his frosty cloak, and drew his chair close to the glowing fire.

"There is indeed no place like home," exclaimed

he, looking round him with a glistening eye. "A welcome like this would repay one for a long life's exile. I feel as if I were a boy once more, I might almost say a girl, for a girl's softness is stealing over my heart."

He bent his head over Mary's flaxen ringlets, and she thought the snow flakes that powdered his hair were melting in drops on her cheeks. She took this favourable opportunity of whispering in his ear some very particular questions about the dolls of the city, which received the best practical answer in the world in the appearance of a waxen doll half as large as herself, which could open and shut its eyes, and which put her into such an ecstasy of joy and admiration it is doubtful whether she slept during the whole night. His mother and Harriet, too, had each their respective gifts, testimonies of affection, whose value can only be known and prized by those who have felt the warmth of such a *welcome home*.

"Haven't you brought something pretty for Rose, too?" said Mary. "Don't you want to see Rose Somers?"

"And how is Rose Somers?" asked he, endeavouring to speak in a tone of unconcern. "Has she forgotten her old schoolmate and friend?"

"I am afraid she *is* forgetting you," answered little Mary, looking thoughtfully down, "for when I asked her the other day if she did not want to see you more than any body in the whole world, she said if she were a little girl like me perhaps she would. She

did not look glad either, for I saw the tears coming into her eyes when she said it."

Harriet smiled, but Augustus seemed infected by Mary's sadness, and remained silent for some time, gazing steadfastly on the blazing hearth. It was then his mother had leisure to observe his countenance, now in repose, and to note the changes two years had wrought. He was much thinner, and she thought paler too, though the fitful glow of the fire made it difficult to judge of the natural hue of his complexion. There was a contraction of the brow, and an indescribable expression about the mouth, caused by a slight quivering of the under lip, and the compression of the upper. This expression was the more remarkable in him, as his face had ever been distinguished by its joyous frankness and vivacity. He looked up, and meeting his mother's mild and earnest gaze, seemed conscious that she was reading a tablet of unutterable thoughts, for he roused himself from the abstraction in which he had fallen, and talked and smiled as he was wont to do in his more boyish days. Before the hour for retiring came, Mrs. Norwood drew a small table near the fire, on which the family Bible was laid. Harriet placed a lamp at its side, and little Mary slid down from her brother's knees, and took a low chair, as if accustomed to a more reverential attitude when listening to the word of God.

"My dear Augustus," said Mrs. Norwood, in a tremulous voice, "this is the hour when we have always most tenderly and feelingly remembered you.

We have never surrounded the family altar without invoking blessings on your head, and praying that you might be shielded from temptation and sorrow. If you still retain your love for this precious Book, and this hallowed hour, I shall feel that my prayers have been answered."

Augustus did not answer, but he opened the book, slowly turned over the leaves, pausing and then going on as if irresolute where to select a portion of its contents. The colour on his face heightened, till his very brow became crimson.

"Excuse me to-night, dear mother," said he hastily. "I am hoarse and weary from riding so long in the cold. Besides I am occupying a place that yourself or Harriet can far better fill."

He rose as he spoke and took the seat farthest from the light, avoiding the anxious glances that followed his footsteps, while Harriet, occupying the one he had vacated, began to read. At first her voice faltered, but gathering firmness as she proceeded, settled into a sweet solemnity of tone, appropriate to the holy truths she uttered. But when the book was closed and they knelt down in prayer, it was the mother's low accents that met the ear. When death had entered that domestic circle and smitten the master of the household, who like the patriarchs of ancient days had offered up the morning and evening sacrifice, Mrs. Norwood had gathered her orphan children around her, and in the deep humility of a stricken and wounded spirit, laid her lonely offerings on the shrine consecrated by the manly devotions of

years. She was not ashamed to lift up her voice, as well as her heart, to Him who is the widow's God and the Father of the fatherless—and her children thus educated in the hallowed atmosphere of prayer and of praise, learnt to realize the omnipresence of their Creator, and to feel that there was an eye that never slumbered or slept, constantly looking at their naked hearts. Several of her younger children had died, and their mother yielding them up in faith to their Redeemer, still bowed her head in prayer, and said, "Father, not my will but thine be done." Little Mary, who was born since her father's death, was the darling of the household. Like a flower blooming in the church-yard, she shed brightness and fragrance over the home then made desolate by grief. And now when happiness and cheerfulness once more gladdened the domestic scene, she, in her sweet and joyous childhood, was the nucleus round which the tenderest cares and fondest affections gathered. Young as she was, her heart even whispered its response to her mother's aspirations and petitions, and she was as much afraid to think an evil thought as to do an evil action. But let us leave Mary to develop her guileless character, as she is called into action, and follow Augustus to his chamber, where he is left alone with his own soul. He looked round on the well-remembered walls—the pure white curtains, the neat, simple furniture,—the shelves filled with well-selected books, till every object seemed to turn into an accusing spirit, and upbraid him for his moral dereliction. And there was the hallowed spot, where

he had been accustomed to kneel in prayer, and his guardian angel was wont to descend to bear up the soul's incense to heaven, after having shed from his wings the blessings with which they were laden. As he pressed his cheek on that spotless pillow, he thought of the visions of his boyhood and early youth, and the sweet image of Rose Somers glided before him so distinctly, she seemed to move between him and the pale moonlight, like a soft and rosy cloud. Affections that had faded away in the polluted atmosphere to which he had been exposed, now rose fresh and redolent as in life's younger spring. And hand in hand with them came virtuous resolutions to aid and sustain them. The past seemed a dream, a dark and troubled one, but its very darkness served to exalt by the strength of contrast the brightness of the future. He had been a slave, the more dishonoured because a willing one, but now he was determined to burst his bonds, and rejoice in the liberty he had so shamefully surrendered. He rose in the morning, in the full vigour of these upright resolutions, but they were made in the confidence of his own strength, and he was yet to prove the instability and weakness of human will, opposed to the power of temptations and habit.

Harriet's geraniums and green-house plants were placed in every window, beautifully relieving the chill white back-ground on which they were displayed. He saw they were arranged with a view to his particular gratification, and he did not suffer a tint to pass unnoticed and unpraised. Mary brought

him her kitten, a beautiful creature, with a body as white as the snow, and a buff and grey tail, which she run round and round after with a peculiar grace. This was duly admired and petted for Mary's sake, who looked upon it with feelings verging towards idolatry.

"Augustus is unchanged," said Harriet, when her brother had left the apartment; "he has preserved his love for nature pure and undiminished. He was weary last night, but this morning he is himself again—only more manly—yet he has not lost his boyish simplicity."

"Gustus isn't changed, no indeed," said Mary, caressing her favourite; "he let my kitten climb his shoulder, to purr there as long as she pleased; you told me, Harriet, he wouldn't care for kittens any more, but he does, and I love him all the better for it, I know."

"Augustus is changed in looks, but not in heart," said Rose Somers to herself, as she sat at their fire-side the evening after his return. "He is paler, and somewhat graver too, but he is handsome, withal—and what he has lost in gaiety, he has gained in sensibility of expression. I wonder if he thinks me changed?" continued she, lowering her eyes before his vivid glance, "he reads me very closely."

Rose, at seventeen, was not the same as Rose at fifteen, and yet the alteration was more in manner than external appearance. She was not beautiful or handsome, yet there was something about her perfectly bewitching, and this charm did not consist in

any graces or smiles, or in any thing that could be defined. It was felt by all who saw her, and yet few could describe the attraction that pervaded her countenance and hung upon her movements.

"I cannot for my life take my eyes off that girl," said an honest farmer; "she makes me think of every body I ever saw before, and yet looks like nobody in the world but herself."

Before Augustus had left the village, Rose was almost a fixture in her mother's household. Of about the same age as Harriet, she was her almost inseparable companion, and the avowed champion of Augustus in all his difficulties and trials. She was the sharer, too, of his merry sports—whether coasting on the snowy hill-side, or sliding over the ice in the bright moonlight, or rambling the green fields in search of summer flowers. But now this familiarity would never do—they must be polite and formal to each other, and Rose did try very hard to call him Mr. Norwood, and to put on a show of womanly reserve, but after a few days she forgot to call him Mr., and to take a seat far from his side. Familiar scenes were renewed, the dear socialities of the winter fireside, the ride in the moonlight, to the sound of the merry going bells, even the coasting down hill, and the sliding on the ice, to the ecstasy of little Mary, who, taking hold of her brother's coat as he skated, thought herself quite an experienced traveller on ice. Mrs. Norwood, when she saw her son the enlivener of their domestic hearth, as he was wont to be, reading for their amusement some work of genius and

feeling, while they were plying their busy needles, and winding up the evening with a portion of God's holy word, felt happy once more, and with the all-hoping, all-believing love of a mother, gave herself up to the conviction that all was right. True, she would have felt very glad to have seen him established in business, but then it was natural after two years' confinement and hard study, that he would wish a little relaxation, and though not possessed of an ample fortune, he was assured of an independence.

Harriet and Rose sat together one night at a later hour than usual, by the fireside. Mrs. Norwood and Mary had retired to bed, and they remained to watch for the return of Augustus, who had gone out with a party of young men on a moonlight expedition on the water. The streams had broken their ice-chains, so that boats could glide on their surface, though the ground was still covered with snow. The young men for several nights had been engaged in the amusement of fishing, and Augustus was induced to join them.

"I wish Augustus had not gone," said Harriet, as hour after hour waned away and he did not return. "I do not like this going on the water at night; and there are some very wild young men of the party."

Rose looked at the clock, then at the window, then walking towards it, looked out upon the street till her eyes were blinded with the intensity of their gaze. "It is very strange," said she, "very strange, indeed. He said he would be back at nine, and now

it is almost twelve. Something must have happened. He never staid out so late before."

"There was a young man drowned last winter in the river, in just such a frolic as this," cried Harriet, her fears gathering strength from the manifest alarm of Rose. "I wonder I could have forgotten it."

"Harriet," exclaimed Rose, taking up her cloak and gathering it around her, "I am not afraid of going out such a night as this. It is as light as day. It is not more than a quarter of a mile to the river the back way. Let us go and see if we can discover any traces of them."

Harriet had some scruples about the propriety of the step, notwithstanding her anxiety about her brother; but Rose, in her impetuosity, bore them down, and in a few moments they were running along the foot-path that led through the fields, so closely muffled in their dark cloaks and hoods, that Augustus himself could not have recognized them. Every thing around them was as still as if all nature were sleeping in the cold moonlight. They heard nothing but the beating of their own hearts, as they glided swiftly on, till they reached the bank of the stream. There was a slight declivity where they stood, and the water rushed and gurgled over the pebbles, and looked so dark and fearful where the moonbeams did not fall, that their imaginations, already excited, invested the scene with something wild, gloomy, and peculiar. Unwilling to express to each other the extent of their fears, afraid of the sound of their own voices in that deep stillness, they remained silent and trembling, looking up and

down the stream, and listening to the faintest sound, till a thousand echoes seemed ringing in their ears. At length they saw a light glimmering on the stream—it came nearer and nearer, growing brighter as it approached, while shouts and mingled voices were distinctly heard. Inspired with new alarm, the two girls sheltered themselves in the shade of a large rock, hoping to escape observation, till this noisy, and seemingly bacchanalian crew had passed. They could see that the boat was full, and that they who rowed, plied the oars with a bold and rapid hand. It came gliding up, with a full sweep, near the very rock by whose shadow they were concealed, and several young men sprang on the bank, but the others dashed merrily on.

"Augustus cannot be among these," whispered Harriet, as a blustering oath from one met her ear.

Rose pressed closer to Harriet, without speaking. She thought she recognized his voice, altered as it was in sound, and it pierced her like a dagger.

"Ha! we have traitors in the camp!" cried one of them, catching a glimpse of the shrinking figures that leaned against the rock; and in a moment they were surrounded.

"Let me see your faces, my pretty ones," said the foremost of the three; "we did not know we were so tenderly watched."

They gathered their cloaks more closely around them, and buried their faces in the folds.

"Come!" said the young man with a bold exclamation, "I will know whether we have got fairies or furies flitting about in the moonlight!"



He caught hold of the cloak nearest to him with no very gentle grasp, when its relaxing folds suddenly filled his arms, and the slight figure of Rose Somers appeared beautifully defined on the dark rock.

"Augustus Norwood, can this be you?" exclaimed she, in a tone so sorrowful and indignant, it recalled him at once to a sense of his situation.

He endeavored to put the cloak round her, but she snatched it from his hand, and throwing it over her own shoulders, walked rapidly forward, almost dragging Harriet, who, weeping and looking back, begged her brother to come home with them.

"What in the name of Heaven brought you here, at this time of night?" said he, pursuing their steps, and speaking in a loud and irritated voice. "A pretty hour for young girls to be abroad alone!"

"Better, far better, to be alone," said Rose, bitterly, "than in the company of those who forget they were once gentlemen."

"Why, Rose, you wouldn't say I am not a gentleman," cried he, forcing a laugh.

Rose turned and gave him one look, but it was sufficient to confirm her worst fears. An unnatural flush burned on his cheek, his eyes flashed with the fires of inebriation—his voice had a strained, inflated tone, his whole expression and manner were transformed.

"We were foolish enough to fear you might be drowned," said Rose; "and forgetting ourselves we came here and exposed ourselves to insult and mortification!"

"Insult!" repeated he; "you may depend upon it, none shall insult you while I am near." He attempted to take her hand and draw it through his arm, but she shrunk from him with undisguised repugnance.

Mrs. Somers and Mrs. Norwood lived side by side. They were now close to the dwelling of the former. Rose bade Harriet a hasty good-night, and springing through the gate was out of sight in a moment. The brother and sister did not exchange a syllable. They entered their own home, retired to their respective chambers—the one to sleep the leaden slumbers succeeding unnatural excitement, the other to weep over a discovery that filled her heart with bitterness and shame.

The next morning Augustus did not appear at the breakfast table, and Harriet's pale cheeks and swollen eyes attracted her mother's attention. Harriet, resolving to screen her brother, and to save her mother, if possible, the anguish of such a disclosure, declared she had caught a terrible cold, which was indeed the case, and that she had a bad headache, which was equally true. She was glad to submit to the usual remedies for such complaints, and to be kept a prisoner in her own room the remainder of the day, to avoid meeting with Augustus, whom she dreaded to see. He, too, kept his room, upon the plea of indisposition, and Mrs. Norwood, who feared from his heavy eyes and feverish countenance, he was attacked with some sudden disease, could with difficulty be prevented from sending for a physician. Little Mary hovered around him, though he took no notice of her presence or at-



tention. The child, unaccustomed to such neglect, stood near him, silent and sad. But, children cannot long restrain the expression of their feelings, and the consciousness of being slighted infused a little bitterness into her loving nature.

"Brother," said she, "I am glad I never saw you sick before. I shouldn't love you so much as I do."

"Why?" asked he, sternly.

"Because it makes your eyes so red, and makes you look cross, too. When mother is sick I love her better than ever, she is so sweet and gentle."

"I never asked you to stay with me," said he, pushing her from him, as, leaning on his shoulder, she was looking up into his face with her earnest and reproachful gaze.

The motion was quick and Mary was thrown upon the floor. She was not hurt, but her heart was bruised by his unkindness. She would not have told of it for the world, but she stole away into some dark corner and wept and sobbed herself to sleep. What *his* reflections were, when reason and feeling once more resumed their empire over his mind, may be gathered from his first interview with Rose Somers, after their midnight meeting by the water.

"You despise me, Rose," said he, stung by her cold, calm reception; "and I deserve your contempt."

"No," said Rose, "but I pity you, pity you from the bottom of my heart."

"And I deserve your pity too, for never was a being more wretched than I have been for the last six days.

Yet, notwithstanding my present misery, I feel a relief in knowing that you know me as I am, that my fatal propensity is no longer concealed from you, that I am not obliged to act the part of a hypocrite and appear an angel of light, when I am actually in league with the powers of darkness."

"No, no, no!" interrupted Rose, turning as white as marble; "you shall not say so. You were tempted, you were overtaken; they forced you to join with them, and in a moment of convivial enjoyment you forgot yourself, Augustus. You did not know what you were doing. It was the first, and it shall be the last time. You shall not belie yourself thus to me, who have known you from childhood—I never *will*, I never *can* believe you!"

"Listen to me, Rose," said the unhappy young man, "while I lay my heart bare before you, even as it will be at the great judgment day. As I hope for mercy then, I will not deceive you now!"

And she did listen, with her hands joined so closely together, that the blood purpled under the nails, and her eyes fixed upon his face with such an intense, imploring expression, it seemed as if her very existence hung upon the relation he was making. He went back to the days of his boyhood and adolescence, those white days as he called them, when the only passion whose ruling power he felt, was his love for *her*, tender and familiar as that of a brother, but of fourfold strength. He dwelt on the scenes, when placed a stranger in a city of strangers, unknown and undreaded, when he had looked upon the wine "when it

was red, when it gave its color to the cup," till his senses became maddened by the taste, and sought for a more inebriating draught. "I said to the tempter," continued he, each time, "it shall be the last. Still, when they held the burning bowl to my lips, I could not dash it from me, but tasted and yielded, till conscience, and reason and memory were drowned, and the image of God was defaced within my soul. Then when I awakened from these deadly trances, and remembered how low I had plunged—when I recollected my mother's prayers and admonitions, her confiding affection—when I thought of you, Rose, and all the sweet dreams that had gilded my boyhood—it almost drove me mad. And, oh! Rose,—that night when I returned home, and my mother asked me to read from that sacred volume, whose precepts I had slighted, and told me of the prayers she had offered up for me, when I was myself surrounded by mementos of unpolluted pleasures and holy aspirations,—what I felt, and how I felt, I never can make you know. Such strong resolutions as I made—such earnest vows—and yet you see I have broken them all! In the first hour of temptation I yielded. Those young men have learned, I know not how, my fatal habit, and exerted every art to allure me to expose myself here. Perhaps they were jealous of my influence with you. Sure I am they glory in my shame!"

He paused, and covering his face with his hands, leaned over the back of his chair, while his frame shook with an ague-like paroxysm. It is affecting even to a hard-hearted person, to see a man weep at

the common and natural vicissitudes of life. What must have been the feelings of the young and sensitive Rose, on seeing the tears of Augustus—tears, too, wrung by that most agonizing of all earthly feelings—*remorse!*

She had sat like a statute of stone, during the history of his degradation, pale and tearless, the image of despair, but now the blood rushed back in vivid warmth to her cheeks, and springing to his side she bent over him, and leaning her face on his shoulder, wept audibly. Even when she felt his arms thrown and locked around her as they had sometimes been in childhood, she did not chide him or withdraw, for she would not for the universe have added a feather's weight to the anguish she saw him suffer.

"Augustus," said she, at length, "do not despair; all will yet be well, if you but *will* it. You are not lost, you cannot be, while you feel so deeply, and when there there are so many hearts that will break in your undoing."

"And could you, Rose," said he, looking up—"could you forgive me for the past, and trust me for the future, if from this moment I break the iron chain of habit and live one of God's freemen, not the bond slave of Satan? Could you forget the two last years of my life, and remember me, as you knew me, before I yielded to this blasting influence?"

"Could I—would I?" exclaimed she, eagerly. "Oh! how little do you know me! There needs no oblivious wave to wash out the remembrance of what I never knew. As freely as you have acknowledged, so freely

will I forgive. One known act of indiscretion can never efface the truth and affection of years. Be true to yourself, and I will think of you only as the dearest, the best ——"

She stopped, blushing at the involuntary strength of her language, and the gloomy countenance of Augustus lighted up for a moment with the sunny look of his boyhood.

"Hear me then," cried he, "while I solemnly promise ——"

"Oh! promise not," exclaimed Rose; "make no rash vows, but pray to Almighty God for strength to resist temptation, and He will give it thee. I too will pray for thee even as for my own salvation."

Augustus listened to her inspiring words, and looked into her kindling eyes, and believed he never could be the monster to betray her confidence, and again prove himself unworthy of the love so triumphant in its faith, so beautiful in its innocence and trust.

The spring came on—green, bright, gladdening and rejoicing spring—with all the splendor, and freshness and beauty peculiar to the latitude in which they dwelt. Streams of verdure seemed to gush up through the melting snows, the waters sparkled in wreaths of living silver down the hill-side and over the plain, waves of melody rolled above amid the branches of the trees, the heavens shone with a deeper blue, the stars flashed with intenser radiance. Rose, like the flower whose name she bore, gathered bloom and sweetness from the blooming season. There was spring-time in her heart and sunshine in her eyes, and

smiles and music on her lips. Augustus was ever at her side, all she could wish or hope for. The dark cloud that had threatened to obscure her destiny had rolled away, and she only remembered it to rejoice still more in the brightness of the present and the hopes of the future.

Months glided on, the vivid bloom of spring melted in the glory of summer, and still Rose was the happiest of the happy. The national festival of freemen approached. The manner in which they were accustomed to celebrate it in this village was peculiarly delightful, for female patriotism and taste were allowed to blend with manly enthusiasm, and gild it with many a decorating tint. After the usual outpourings of eloquence, and the bustle of a public dinner, the gentlemen and ladies met together, towards the sunset hour, on some green plot selected for the occasion, where a bower was erected and a table spread, covered with every variety of cake and fruit, adorned with the flowers of the season, and wreathed with wild-wood garlands. A band of music was stationed in the shade of the trees, that made the grove ring with melody, and blithe hearts respond to the inspiring strains. Augustus had been the orator of the day, and with that graceful, florid eloquence which is so captivating to the eye and to the ear, had elicited universal applause. Rose exulted in the admiration he excited, but when she saw him led away in triumphant procession, she knew that the hour of temptation was come, and she began to tremble. He turned as he passed and met her anxious glance with one so full of love and confi-

dence, that she felt ashamed of her momentary fear. She had not time to indulge in any misgivings, for she was chosen the presiding queen of the bower, and in honor of Augustus she wanted it to be decorated with regal beauty. The bower was erected on the banks of the stream already described, and a boat with awnings waited the motion of those who felt disposed to glide on its bosom.

Rose and Harriet, assisted by the other young maidens of the village, had rifled the woods of their sweets, and little Mary, who had followed them with a hop, skip and jump, every step they took, gathered the buds and blossoms that nestled low in their mossy beds. Her unwearied fingers helped to twine the festoons that swept from tree to tree, linking bough with bough in flowery sisterhood. When the fairy arch was completed, and declared to be perfect in beauty, she filled her apron with some hidden treasure, and seating herself in a remote corner, appeared to be engaged in a mysterious operation. Then springing on her feet, she waved a lovely garland in the air, and running towards Rose, "See," said she, "you are queen to-day, and here is your crown—is it not sweet? and don't she look sweet in it?" continued she, appealing to all around her, as Rose bent her head, and Mary bound the dewy coronet on her brows. All united in paying testimony to the sweetness of Rose, for she was the darling of the village, and sweet was the very epithet to be applied to her.

Every body said Rose Somers was a sweet looking girl, yet no one had ever called her beautiful. She

certainly never had looked so pretty as at this moment, in her simple white dress and crown of wild flowers, the color in her cheeks coming and going, her eyes darkening and sparkling as the martial music swelled on the ear, and her heart told her it was the herald of Augustus. But little Mary herself was an object that attracted every eye. They had twisted rose-buds and myrtle in her flaxen ringlets, encircled her white neck and girdled her waist with wreaths, which she in her innocent childhood delighted to wear. Rose said she looked almost too much like a lamb, decorated for sacrifice, but Mary would not part with any of her ornaments, and wore them with a sportive grace that might have excited the envy of a city belle.

"There he is, there is brother," exclaimed she, clapping her hands, as the music sounded loud and near, the thick boughs swung back, the military band parted to the right and left, and Augustus was ushered in between, directly in front of the bower, where Rose stood, attended by the fairest maidens of the village.

"What is the matter, Rose?" said a young girl by her side, whose arm she had caught with an unconscious grasp.

"Nothing," answered Rose, but her face turned as white as her dress, and her eyes had a sudden look of anguish and dread. One glance told her that Augustus had forgotten his vow of self-denial, and yielded to the tempter's snare. He had the same high flush on his cheek and unnatural brightness of the eye she too well remembered having once before seen. His hair was disordered, his steps irregular—in short, he had

that indescribable air of abandonment, that mingled expression of self-satisfaction and folly, that plainly mark the incipient stages of inebriation.

"Why, Rose, my bonny Rose," exclaimed he, in an exalted tone, "you do act the queen most rarely. Let the most humble and obedient of your subjects thus pay homage to your majesty." Then dropping on his knees, he burst forth in a flowery and theatrical strain of compliment, she in vain endeavoured to check. Mary laughed at this mock-heroic strain, and thought it very graceful, and admirably in keeping with the joyous occasion; but Rose, who knew too well the cause of his unwonted freedom of speech and manner, felt her heart ache within her. She tried to smile, but in the very effort the tears gushed from her eyes. His sorrow and wonder and sympathy was now as extravagant and high flown as his admiration, and Rose, finding her situation intolerable, drew back behind the boughs of the arbour, where she for a while eluded his observation. Thither Harriet followed her, and had they been at home and alone, the two unhappy girls would have thrown themselves into each other's arms, and wept unrestrainedly.

There was a young man who had persecuted Rose with very unwelcome attentions during the absence of Augustus, attributing the slight he had received to preference for him, felt for him the bitterest hatred. He it was who had discovered "the burning plague-spot in his heart," and exerted every art to spread it into a consuming flame. At the convivial board, which they had just left, he had seated himself at his side

even as Satan sat at the ear of Eve, and whispered evil words of temptation. It was his hand that filled each brimming glass, and mingled with the portion a hotter, more intoxicating beverage. If they who lead many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever, what shall be the destiny of those who, like the Dragon in the apocalyptic vision, are not satisfied with going down into the gulf of perdition themselves, but endeavour to drag the sons of light in their train?

Several of the party were now in the boat, and called upon Augustus to join them. He looked round for Rose and Harriet, and not perceiving them, his eye rested on little Mary, who had been impatiently waiting his notice.

"Bless your sweet face," cried he, catching the lovely little creature in his arms; "who made such a cherub of you? Come, don't you want to go with me in the boat, and sail like another Robinson Crusoe?"

Mary threw her arms around his neck in ecstasy at the thought, and Augustus springing into the boat, it pushed from the shore, the oars keeping time to the music as they dipped, and the rays of the setting sun gilded the white foam they left behind.

Harriet caught a glimpse of Mary, elevated as she was in her brother's arms, as the boat glided on, and, rushing to the bank, she entreated him to return, as she had promised her mother not to suffer Mary to go near the boat or the water.

"Is she not safe with me?" cried he, laughing; "who will take care of her if I do not?"

Mary, at the sound of her sister's imploring accents, remembered the parting injunction of her mother, and her heart smote her for her disobedience.

"Oh, Augustus!" said she, "please let me go back. I forgot that mother forbid me—indeed I did. Let me go to Harriet—she's calling me yet."

The child bent forward with an earnest emotion towards her sister, to show her willingness to obey her summons. Augustus was standing near the edge of the boat, with one arm thrown around her, while he kept time with the other to the regular rocking of the slight bark. He was entirely unprepared for her sudden, springing motion, and before he was fully aware of losing his unguarded hold, she was seen fluttering through the air, like a wounded bird, and then the waters parted and gushed over her sinking form, the golden hair gleaming for a moment on the surface, then lost in the dark ripples of the stream. Shrieks of agony now mingled with the gay notes that still swelled on the ear; all was confusion and dismay. Augustus plunged into the water after his drowning sister. Harriet and Rose were seen struggling on the bank with those who held them back from the mad attempt of saving her with whom they must have perished.

At length Augustus appeared with Mary in his arms, but she was cold and insensible. Her lips and cheeks were blue, and her little hands clenched and rigid. She was borne to the nearest house, and the usual means of resuscitation employed; still when her

mother came, in answer to the sad summons that had just reached her, she remained as cold as the wave from which she had been drawn.

After unavailing efforts to restore her she was pronounced dead, and was borne in grief that mocks description to the home she had left a few hours before, the most joyous of human beings. They laid her on a sofa, and sympathizing friends crowded round to catch one more look of the sweet child consigned so early to such an awful doom. Mrs. Norwood knelt down by her side, and clasping her hands together, pressed them on her heart, as if to hold down its murmurings. She lifted her eyes to heaven in wordless prayer for resignation, when a wild scream from Harriet sent the blood rushing through her veins with startling rapidity.

"She breathes, mother, she breathes!" exclaimed Harriet, throwing herself into her mother's arms with an hysterical cry.

And truly she did breathe,—faint and uncertain at first the pale tints of life began to steal over the wan hue of death, the rigid hands unclenched, the heavy lids slowly uplifted, an indistinct murmur escaped her lips. It was then the widowed mother wept aloud. The grief was silent, but her joy and gratitude burst forth. She received her living child to her bosom once more, even as Jairus received his daughter from the dead, and she knew that the Son of God was present, though invisible to mortal eye, with heart as tenderly alive to human misery, with arm as omnipotent to save, as when He stood by the grave of Lazarus,

and wept over him he was about to wake from the slumbers of death. The first words little Mary distinctly uttered were, "Where is brother?"

And "Where indeed is Augustus?" was repeated by the anxious mother. It was recollected then that Augustus had not been seen since they left the river's side; that when it was declared that Mary was dead, he had exclaimed again and again, "*What dead! Is she dead?*" Then rushed by those who were around her, like a madman, and disappeared.

A new and agonizing cause of alarm now existed. The fears of Rose and Harriet were too appalling to be expressed. Mrs. Norwood knew not yet the cause of their worst apprehensions, though she was told that it was from his arms that Mary fell.

All night she sat by the couch of Mary, cherishing warmth in her still shivering frame, praying for her son, fearing she knew not what, and listening to the echo of his name as she sometimes heard it borne on the night wind. Harriet could not remain within; she followed Rose to the scene of their past festivity, where the people were confusedly mingled, looking up and down the stream, and shouting till the sound rolled back again on their ears, the name of Augustus. As the torches and lanterns gleamed fitfully through the shades, Rose beheld a dark object near the bank, and running towards it she discovered the hat of Augustus, with his gloves lying beside it. At these dumb witnesses of his mournful destiny, Rose sunk in speechless agony on the sand, where she lay unnoticed in the excitement and confusion, and when she was found,

she was perfectly insensible, clasping the gloves to her bosom, her hair and garments damp and wet with the chill night dews.

"It was a pity," as a kind neighbor said, who followed her to her own home, where they bore her—"it was a pity to bring her to herself, and see her take on so bitterly."

The next day the deep, continuous roaring of cannon was heard all along the banks of the river, where the people still thronged, in the hope of discovering the body of him who they supposed had made his own grave in its channel. It was all in vain. The waters, agitated by the concussion, heaved and subsided, and heaved again—then sinking back into a sullen calm, betrayed not the secrets of its bosom.

For several days the village continued in a state of excitement: but after a while the conviction that Augustus was drowned, being universally felt, all deplored, some pitied, some condemned him; yet all resumed their former occupations, and gradually suffered his name to die away on their lips and his memory from their hearts—all but two families, from which smiles and gladness seemed banished for ever. It was many weeks before Rose was able to leave her room, and when she did, she looked like the ghost of herself. Her long exposure to the night-air, and her exhausting paroxysms of agony, acting on a naturally delicate constitution, had brought on a lingering illness, from which many thought she never would recover; and when she was seen moving about with such a languid step and mournful countenance, and



such an air of broken-heartedness, her friends felt as if they could scarcely congratulate her on her recovery. She went nowhere but to Mrs. Norwood's; except to visit the abodes of sickness and poverty, and when on such errands, her steps grew more light and her eyes less sad, for even disease and chill penury smiled at her approach, and she felt while she could thus impart blessings to others, she did not live in vain. It seemed to her that if Augustus had lived, and she had seen him gradually given up to the dominion of the fatal vice that had been his destruction, she could have ceased to love him; or had he died on the bed of sickness reconciled to his God, and trusting in his Saviour, she could have learned resignation; but there was something so awful and dark and mysterious about his fate, there was so much reason to believe he had committed that deed for which there is no repentance or hopes of pardon, his memory was associated with images of shame and woe and dread. When with his mother and sister, she never breathed his name; she could not do it, but their eyes would often fill with tears when they met, and their voices falter, indicating the subject on which their thoughts were dwelling. Mary was the only one who mourned for him *aloud*. The sorrows of childhood must be expressed in words, and Mary's innocent and overflowing tongue often gave unutterable pain. She was too young to understand their mournful silence, and fearing they were forgetting him, whom she loved so well, she tried to make up, by her

own ardent expressions of love and grief, for their suspected injustice to his memory.

Two years passed away, and the third was rolling on; still Rose, faithful to her early love, refused to listen to other vows. Her former persecutor renewed his addresses, but she turned from him with loathing. She had heard the part he had acted, and looked upon him as the destroyer of Augustus. Harriet was married to a young man, whom she had long known and valued, and gone far from the home of her youth, while Rose clung to Mrs. Norwood, and even as Ruth clave to Naomi, and filled a daughter's place in her bosom.

One evening, about the twilight hour, Mrs. Norwood sat in the piazza that fronted the dwelling, with Rose and Mary, shaded by the sweet brier and honeysuckle, that ran trailing round the walls. The last sunbeams were melting into shadows, and gave a rich, bronze-like hue to the distant landscape; sprinkling the nearer objects with rays of scattering gold, and fringing the clouds with living crimson. Mary sat with her head leaning on her mother's lap, and her fair ringlets, now darkening into brown, were tossed back from her brow, with the wild grace of childhood. She was taller than she was two years before: but her face was scarcely changed. Her eyes were as intensely blue, and they were now lifted up to her mother's face, with that peculiar expression which assimilated her to the likeness of a cherub.

"I wish I were a painter," said Rose, who sat the other side of Mrs. Norwood; "and I would sketch

this beautiful sunset view, with Mary exactly in her present attitude, looking up into your eyes."

"And who would paint you, Rose?" said Mary; "for you are the prettiest of the whole."

"Oh, no," answered Rose, with a sigh and a smile; "I must not be put in at all. I should spoil the picture."

"Well, you must be sure to put that gentleman in that's coming up the street," said Mary. "I can see him through trees."

The path which led to Mrs. Norwood's door was winding, and thickly shaded with trees: so much so, that though they were aware of the stranger's approach to their own door, they could catch but glimpses of his person, till he came to the very steps of the piazza. Before they had time to breathe or speak, he rushed towards Mary and snatching her in his arms, with a wild cry, sank down on his knees and exclaimed,

"Oh! my God—I thank thee—I bless thee—I am not then a murderer." Then falling prostrate at Mrs. Norwood's feet, again repeated the thrilling ejaculation—"My God—I bless thee!"

There is a joy that baffles description, joy so deep, and overwhelming, it struggles in vain for words and finds utterance only in tears and sobs and sounds resembling woe. As the Widow of Nain received her only son alive, from the bier, as the mourning sisters of Bethany welcomed their brother from the grave, so was the long-lost son, brother and lover greeted. And if there is joy in heaven over the repenting sin-

ner and returning prodigal, we may believe the holy angels themselves sympathized in this affecting scene. It was long before sufficient composure was obtained for him to relate, or them to hear, the mystery of his absence explained.

It was not till after the friends, who had gathered in at the tidings, were departed, (for the news of his return spread like wild-fire through the village) and they were in the retirement of their own household, they could listen to his story. The evening lamps illumined a pale and agitated, but happy looking group, clustered closely round the speaker, while he gave, interrupted by a thousand emotions, the following narration.

The night of his disappearance, when he heard it positively declared that Mary was dead, he remembered nothing but the wild purpose of flying far as the winds of Heaven could bear him, as if he could fly from himself, or escape from the scorpions that were writhing in his breast. How far he wandered he knew not, nor when his strength and reason forsook him. He found himself, on recovering the use of his senses, in a tent, by the way-side; a most benignant looking gentleman, bending over him, and a lovely lady bathing his temples and chafing his hands, with all a woman's tenderness. They were travellers to the far west, who having provided themselves with every comfort and accommodation, had encamped during the night under the shade of the trees. He had been probably attracted by the glimmer of their light, and having approached it, fell exhausted, chilled and un-

conscious of the cares that were extended towards the apparently expiring stranger.

The next morning he was able to rise, but he had remained so long in his drenched clothes, with such a fiery current burning in his veins, he was seized with a slow fever, and was compelled to accept the offers of these kind Samaritans. They spread a pallet for him on the bottom of the carriage, stopped when he was too weary to go on, nor did they apply their ministrations to his body alone; for their holy conversation was a balm to his wounded spirit, and the despair that had succeeded the keen agonies of remorse, gradually softened into a more godly sorrow. He went with them to their western home, and there he remained, believing his name must be accursed in his own. On the return of health, he assisted his friend in clearing the wilderness, and diffusing around the blessings of civilization and refinements of taste. He had told him his history, and the solemn determination he had made, if God gave him strength to keep it, to make himself a new name and fame, in a place where he was unknown, and to struggle with his prevailing sin, till he conquered even at the sacrifice of life. He did struggle and came off victorious. He could see the wine-cup and the *fire-cup* too, pass by, untempted, for "the voice of the charmer had ceased to charm, charm he never so wisely." It was long before he dared to believe that he was indeed free, that he could walk forth without the dread of returning to the prison-house of shame; but when time had proved the reality of his reformation, he resolved to

return once more to the home he had made desolate, and say to his mother, as the prodigal to his injured father:—"I have sinned against Heaven, and against thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son—but take me to your bosom again, and let me bind up the wounds I have made." He thought of her who had loved him even in his degradation. He dared not think she loved him still, but if he were doomed to see her the wife of another, he felt the punishment was just. He thought too how he would visit the grave of little Mary, and there, with a broken and contrite heart, renew his covenant vows to his Maker, and supplicate his forgiveness and grace. And now he was seated at his mother's side; the forgiven and blest, with that sweet, rosy, loving being, clinging around his neck, in all the warmth and bloom of her loveliness; whom he believed cold and mouldering beneath the clods of the valley, and Rose too, half enclosed in his arms, still faithful and confiding; her eyes beaming with modest love and holy gratitude, bending on that manly countenance, from which every darkening trace was swept away.

Let it not be said then, that the man "who deliberates is lost." He may deliberate between the choice of virtue and vice; he may even choose the path of vice, and leave the boundaries of virtue, but he may return to wisdom's ways and find them pleasantness, and her paths peace. The Ethiopian *cannot* change his skin, nor the leopard his spots, but *they who have been accustomed to do evil, may learn to do well.*

## Aunt Mercy.

WE sat together in the little back parlor the evening before our father's departure. He was a sea-captain, and bound for a distant voyage. We had not been separated from him since our mother's death, and oppressed by a sense of coming loneliness, I listened to the autumnal wind that sighed against the windows, thinking it the most melancholy of earthly sounds. My father put his arm affectionately round each of us, as we sat on either side of him, and drew us closer to him. He did not speak for some time, but gazed steadily into the fire, as if he feared to look upon us, lest he should be betrayed into some unmanly weakness. "My daughters," said he at length, "my heart is relieved from great anxiety on your account. I have two letters, received almost simultaneously, both containing affectionate offers of a home to one of you, during my absence. The choice must be left to yourselves."

"Who are they from?" cried Laura, eagerly; "tell me, dear father, do?"

"One is from your Aunt Mercy," replied my father. Here Laura's countenance fell. "The other is from Mrs. Belmont, whom you once visited and admired."

"Oh! yes," exclaimed Laura, with sparkling eyes, "I remember Mrs. Belmont perfectly. She is the

most charming woman I ever saw, has the most elegant house, and keeps the most delightful company. I thought when I was there I should be the happiest creature in the world if I could live as she did. Oh! father, let me go to Mrs. Belmont's, and send Fanny to Aunt Mercy's.

"And what objections have *you* to go to Aunt Mercy's?" said my father, without addressing me, who continued to hold his hand in silence, for my heart was too full to speak.

"Oh! I never did like Aunt Mercy," said Laura, with a look of disgust. "She is so precise, and formal, and fanatical. She is an old maid, too, you know, and they say they are always peevish and ill-natured. Then she lives in a small house, almost in the wood, and sees no company but the cats. I am sure I would die with home-sickness, if I were to stay with Aunt Mercy."

"And what do you think Fanny will do?" asked my father, in a tone which I thought breathed of rebuke.

"Fanny," repeated Laura, as if she were waking to a consciousness of my existence, "why, Fanny is very different from me—and I dare say would content herself very well. Besides, I am the oldest, and have a right to the first choice, and if I choose Mrs. Belmont's, Fanny is obliged to go to Aunt Mercy's, whether she wishes it or not."

"I should like to see a little more regard for your sister's comfort, Laura," he replied, knitting his brows. "I am sorry to see you manifest so selfish a disposition, and as a just punishment, I shall insist upon the

reverse; or, at least, that Fanny should exercise the privilege of selection."

Laura burst into a passionate fit of tears, declaring that she would rather stay at home alone, and would do so; for, as for going to Aunt Mercy's, it was out of the question.

"Since you give me the privilege of choosing, dear father," said I, distressed at Laura's violent emotion, and the motive which excited it, "I shall be as happy with Aunt Mercy as I could be with any one while you are absent, and I think it very kind in her to make the offer. I should feel as little at home at Mrs. Belmont's as Laura would at Aunt Mercy's."

My father laid his hand upon my head, and shading back the ringlets from my forehead, gave me a look of approbation that would have repaid me for the sacrifice of my life, if it were possible to enjoy the reward of such a sacrifice.

"You are a good child, Fanny," said he, "and you will be a happy one wherever you are. How much your eyes are like your mother's now you are looking down! and you are like her in character too. She was always ready to yield her own gratification when it interfered with the happiness of others. She never thought of herself." Laura looked uneasy while my father was speaking. The pleasure of gratified desire and the mortification of rebuked selfishness struggled in her countenance. "If I ever return," said my father, rising, and walking to and fro with folded arms and bent brow, "we shall see who has made the wisest choice."

I shall pass over my father's departure and its sad accompaniments. Minute detail is seldom interesting unless it leads to the development of character, and as it is Aunt Mercy's character that I wish to describe, rather than my own, I hasten to the moment when I became an inmate of her household, Laura having previously been received into the home of Mrs. Belmont. I had but a dim recollection of Aunt Mercy, never having seen her since my early childhood. She lived in the deepest seclusion, seldom visited her relatives and friends, and when her visits were made to my mother I was at school, so that it was only through the medium of others I had obtained my knowledge of her character. I knew she must be far advanced in years, being the sister of my grandmother, not of my mother, and a feeling of awe began to steal over me as I drew near her dwelling, a kind of wintry chill, indicating that the snows of life were near. It was a clear, autumnal evening; the dark brown woods skirted the road on either side, and here and there, through the rustling foliage, I could see the stars sparkle and the deep blue sky shining, and sometimes I could catch a glimpse of waters flashing through the underbrush, and sometimes I could hear the low, gurgling sound of a stream, whose murmurs alone revealed its existence. The great secret of melancholy seemed diffused over the world. I felt as if I were alone in creation. I had no companion with me in the carriage. I had left no friends behind. My father was now launched on the billows, perhaps never to return. My mother slept the last, deep sleep. I was going to one who, from age,

sanctity, and personal peculiarities, seemed as far removed from the sphere in which I had been moving, as the planets above, revolving in their lone and distant orbits. Happy they who have never felt that orphanage of the soul which came over me with such a dreary and oppressive power. As the carriage turned into the yard, the silence surrounding the low white dwelling, almost embosomed in shade—the solitary light that gleamed through one curtained window—the complaining notes of a whippoorwill perched near the wall—added to the solemnity of the hour, and imagination, delineating the form of Aunt Mercy with cold grey eyes, and wintry countenance, and ancient costume, threw me into such a state of nervous debility, I had hardly strength to descend from the carriage and enter the door that opened as if by magic to receive me, for I had heard no sound of life. At first I thought it was a statue standing on the threshold of the inner apartment, so still, and pale, and erect it looked, arrayed in a robe of white, whose folds fell voluminously from the neck to the feet, and remained as calm as those of a winding sheet. A cap with a close crimped border surrounded the face, whose pallid hue corresponded with the death-like impression the dress had made. I trembled as I approached, as if an inhabitant of another world were waiting to receive me, when the tall, still figure, extending its hands, spoke in a sweet, tremulous voice, “Fanny, my child, is it you? welcome to the home of the aged.”

At the sound of those kind, *living* accents, the spell of supernatural awe was broken, and throwing my-

self into the arms which involuntarily opened to enfold me, I wept myself into calmness. I was hardly conscious of what was passing around me, till I found myself seated by a cheerful fire, whose blaze revealed, while it warmed, the pure, white walls, the white curtains, that dropped to the floor without a single festoon, the white, ungirdled dress of Aunt Mercy: and by its bright reflection, I could see too, her gray parted hair, divided with the precision of a geometrical line, and her dark, deep-set eyes, that beamed like lamps through the mists of age. There was a fascination in the glance of those eyes, as they were steadfastly fixed on me. They did not seem looking at my face, but my soul. The memory, not the fire of human passion slumbered in their solemn depths. But, when withdrawing their fixed gaze from me, and lifting them upwards, she remained for a few moments in the same attitude, with her hands folded, there was a holy and sublime abstraction, that showed her thoughts were withdrawn from all external objects, and were holding communion with the Great Invisible. Then again turning to me, she said, as if thinking aloud, rather than addressing me—“When I last saw her, she was little more than a smiling infant; and now she is what her mother was full twenty years ago. Time! time! what a solemn thing is time. It carries us on, day and night, without slumbering or pausing, and we heed it not, till borne like me, almost to the shores of eternity, we listen with wonder to the dashing of the billows we have passed over, and look back upon the dark and troubled waters that heave



themselves into rest on the borders of the promised land."

I gazed with reverence on this hoary mariner of time, thus surveying with a backward glance the untravelled wilderness before me; but I sighed to think she must have survived the affections and yearning sympathies of her kind, and that I must learn to repress in her presence the ebullitions of youthful emotion. Her next words convinced me how erroneous was this conclusion.

"I pity you, my child. You have a gloomy prospect before you, as the companion of age and loneliness. But the fountain of love is not dried up in my veins. The current flows warm and deep beneath the ice. If you seek wisdom, rather than pleasure, you may not in after years reflect with sorrow that you lingered a little by the way-side, communing with an aged pilgrim, who could tell you something of the mysteries of the journeys of life. And something too, I trust," added she, placing her hand reverently on the Bible, which lay on the table by her side, "of that eternal country whither the young, as well as the old, are rapidly travelling."

Though I had been but a half hour in Aunt Mercy's presence, I had already gathered some precious lessons, and I looked forward to the hoard of wisdom I might acquire during my daily communion with her. Tenderness began to mingle with the awe she inspired, and when I retired to my own room, which was an apartment adjoining hers, I thought though the hours passed with my venerable relative might be

very serious ones, they need not consequently be unhappy. When I first entered the chamber, however, I could not repress a nervous shudder. The same cold uniformity of white was visible that distinguished the room below. White walls, white curtains to bed and windows, and an old-fashioned toilet table, with a long, flowing, white muslin petticoat, all presented a most wintry aspect. "Surely," said I, "Aunt Mercy has selected white, because it is the livery of angels. I shall not dare to think an unpolluted thought, surrounded by such emblematic purity. I shall be reminded of Him in whose sight 'the heavens are not clean,' and 'who sitteth on a white throne in the midst of his glory.'"

The powerful influence of Aunt Mercy's solemn character, was already visible in my reflections. That influence pursued me even in my dreams; for I dreamed that I was sailing alone in a little bark over an ocean, that seemed illimitable in extent, and unfathomable in depth, and that a tall, white figure, defined on the dark and distant horizon beckoned me onward, and ever and anon lifted a lamp that blazed in her right hand, and sent a long stream of brightness over the abyss of waters. As I came nearer and nearer, and the boat glided with inconceivable swiftness, the lamp flashed with such intolerable splendour, that it awoke me, and opened my eyes, the sunbeams darted through the opening of the curtains directly in my face, and explained the vision of the lamp. My first thought was a dread of Aunt Mercy's displeasure for slumbering so late, for I had heard that she break-



fasted at sunrise, but the kind manner in which she greeted me when I descended dispelled my fears.

"I knew you must be fatigued from your journey," said she, "and would not suffer you to be wakened; but to-morrow we will rise together, for your youthful frame can hardly require more hours for repose than mine. I always think when the Lord of day is on his way rejoicing and scattering blessings in his path, it is a shame for us to be laggards behind."

I blushed when I recollected what a laggard I had been, and that I, the young and buoyant, had even this duty to learn from the aged and infirm. Yet I could hardly call Aunt Mercy infirm. Her figure was still erect and dignified, her step unfaltering; and though time's engraving hand had left its tracery on her cheek and brow, her eyes at times, not only flashed with the brilliancy, but expressed the energy of earlier years. She seldom smiled, but when she did, her countenance exhibited an appearance of indescribable serenity, reminding me of a lake by moonlight, when the wind just curls its surface, and the rays gently quiver in the motion. The first day I was excited by the charm of novelty. The perfect quiet and neatness that reigned in the household; the clock-work regularity with which every thing was performed; the industry that harmonised so beautifully with this order and tranquillity, astonished while it delighted me. It seemed impossible to me that human beings could live, and move, and work with so little bustle. Yet there was constant activity. Aunt Mercy herself was never idle a moment; she

was either knitting, sewing or reading; indeed, her knitting needles seemed a part of her fingers, and the stocking to grow under her touch, from a natural, not an artificial process. I wondered why she manufactured so many articles, for which she could have no possible use; but I soon learned that many were the feet she covered by her industry, as well as the mouths she fed with her bounty. Never was name more appropriately given, for far as her liberal hand could reach, her benefactions and her care extended. She never encouraged idleness or vice, but wherever there was infancy, orphanage, infirmity, and age, united with poverty, her charities descended gently and unostentatious as the dews of heaven.

"You make me ashamed of the indolence of my past life," said I, as I watched her unwearied fingers; "I feel as if I had lived in vain; I have been praised because I was willing to do something for myself, and now I feel that it is only what we do for others deserves commendation."

"Praise is sweet," replied Aunt Mercy, "from the lips of those we love, but if we do good to others for the *sake* of this reward, we sacrifice the blessing of Him who has presented to us higher and holier motives for action. Do not praise me, my Fanny, because I endeavour to 'do diligently what my hands find to do,' for the shadows of twilight are falling round me, and that dark night will soon come, wherein 'no man can work.'"

It may be believed by some, that the solemnity of Aunt Mercy's language, her constant allusions to

death and eternity, and the inspired quotations with which her conversation abounded, would fill my young and ardent imagination with gloom and terror. But it was not so; they exalted, instead of depressing me; they created in me a thirst for sacred knowledge, a spirituality of feeling as sublime as it was novel—I could exclaim with a more heavenly ambition, than that which animated the Egyptian enchantress, “I feel immortal longings in me.”

It was a somewhat novel sight, to see such close companionship and increasing congeniality of feeling, between two beings, so far removed by age from each other—the snows of winter only drew us closer together, and I almost dreaded to witness the spring-time of the year, lest in the midst of its opening splendors, I should lose something of her divine instructions. An occasional letter from Laura, varied the pleasing monotony of my existence; she always addressed me as “poor Fanny”—then as if that expression of condolence satisfied her sisterly affection, she expatiated on her gay and happy life, and the pleasures that courted her enjoyment; her volatile mind flew from one subject to another, from the theatre to the ball-room, from the ball-room to the concert, &c., with bewildering speed; and with all these dazzling scenes she mingled descriptions of attending gentlemen: some had “eyes of fire,” others “tongues of eloquence,” and “lips of music,” and all were included in the compendious epithet, “divine.” I should have profited little by the example and precepts of the evangelical Aunt Mercy, if I had not revolted at

the application of this term; I grieved at the levity of her sentiments; I did not envy her the pleasures that had such an intoxicating influence on her heart; I did not sigh for the admiration of that sex from whose society I was so entirely excluded; I had never been accustomed to it, and the rapturous expressions of Laura astonished my young simplicity. One evening, after the perusal of one of these letters, as I sat at Aunt Mercy's side, I ventured to address her in a more familiar manner than I had ever done before. I longed to hear her explain the mystery of her lonely life. “Dear Aunt Mercy,” said I, taking her hand in mine, and looking earnestly in her face, “do you think it a sin to love?” She actually started at the question, and I felt her hand tremble in my clasp.

“Do you ask idly?” said she, fixing her deep eyes with a melancholy gaze on my face, “or do you, child as you are, speak from the heart's dictates.”

“No,” answered I, blushing at the suggestion. “I know nothing yet of love, and judging from Laura's allusions, I think I never shall. But I have often wondered why you, who must have been very beautiful indeed, when young”—here a faint smile glimmered over Aunt Mercy's features, a lingering spark of vanity, flashing through the shades of threescore and ten—“why you should have been”—I began to hesitate, for I could not allow myself to use Laura's expression, and say “an old maid”—then after a moment's reflection, I added, “why you should have been single, when almost every one marries; I thought, perhaps, you believed it sinful to love any one else

but God." I would have given any thing to have recalled the expression of my childish curiosity; I was terrified at the emotion exhibited in her usual placid countenance; her eyes assumed a look of wild anguish, contrasting fearfully with their wonted calm, religious glance; then slowly lifting them to Heaven, and clasping her withered hands together, she exclaimed, "Sinful! oh! my Father!—sinful indeed must be the passion, whose memory even now can raise such a tumult in these wintry veins; I thought all was peace here," continued she, unclasping her hands, and pressing them tightly on her breast, "the peace of God that passeth all understanding; but no, no, the troubled waters are heaving, heaving still." As she reiterated the last words, her head bowed lower and lower, her whole frame shook, and tears gathering in large drops, glided down her cheeks, through channels, which had long been dry. I felt as if I had committed sacrilege in thus disturbing the holy calm of her soul; a burst of flame, rising from the still waters that cover the buried cities of the plain, could not be more awful or surprising, than this storm of human passion, thus convulsing the bosom of age. I knew not in what manner to express my penitence and sorrow. I wept; I threw my arms around her; I actually knelt at her feet and implored her to forgive me. The attitude roused her from her trance-like state; she held out her right hand, and commanded me to rise. I rose and stood before her pale and trembling, like a culprit uncertain of her doom.

"Leave me, child, leave me," she cried, "till I

gain composure, from the only source from which the weary and heavy laden can find rest—long, long years have rolled away since any human being has struck the chord your hand has pressed. I thought it had ceased to quiver—I have deceived myself; I feel humbled in the dust; I would humble myself still more before the mighty hand of God. Leave me alone, my child, and when I am calm once more, you shall learn the history of my youth, and may you profit by its mournful lesson."

I withdrew to my chamber, grieved and agitated, yet awaiting with impatience the expected summons. But I heard Aunt Mercy enter her own room and close her door, without recalling me to her presence. She always kept a light burning during the night, that she might not disturb her servants, if one were required, but this night it was extinguished, and accustomed as I had been to see its rays streaming beneath the door, I shuddered at the darkness, of which my rashness had been the cause. I trembled when I reflected on the might of human passion—"Terrible, terrible," thought I, "must it be in its strength, if even in decay it can triumph over the coldness of age, and roll its wild waves over the traces the Spirit of God has written on the soul. Let *me* be spared its desolating power; let me live on as I now do, calm and passionless, striving to walk in the path of duty, with an eye directed to Heaven, and a heart devoted to God. Here, in this solitude, I am secure from temptation, and can know nothing of the

struggles, of which to-night I have been a fearful witness."

The next morning I almost feared to look at Aunt Mercy, expecting to see the same wild and agitated countenance, but the placidity of Heaven was on her brow. There might be an air of deeper humility; of more saintly meekness, if that were possible, but there was no other change. I felt a tenderness for her I had never experienced before. Aunt Mercy, the anchorite, the saint, was a being I revered; but Aunt Mercy, loving and suffering, was a being I loved. The day passed away, as usual, in industry and quiet, but when the evening came on, and we were seated again, side by side, at the lonely hearth, my heart began to palpitate with expectation, for Aunt Mercy suffered her knitting to remain untouched in her basket, and her book lay unopened on the table.

"My dear Fanny," said she, "your asking eyes shall not seek mine in vain; I have been steadily looking at the past, and am astonished at the calmness with which I can now review events, from which last night I recoiled with such dread; I have not slept, but prayed, and towards the dawn of morning, it seemed as if an angel came and ministered unto me. Like Jacob, I had wrestled for the blessing and prevailed. It is humbling to me to know that the reverence with which you have regarded me will be diminished, and that you will look upon me henceforth as a sinful and sorrowing woman; and I should

rejoice that you will no longer ascribe to an erring creature, perfections which belong to God alone.

"When I was young—can you roll back the winters that have frosted my head, and restore me to the spring-time of life? If you can you must think of me, at this moment, not as I am, but as I was, with the bloom of youth on my cheek, and its hopes warm in my heart. Let this thought, my child, check the high throbbings of youthful vanity; as sure as you live to reach the confines of age, you will, like me, present but a faded image of what you once have been; the eyes, those windows from which the soul looks forth, will be *darkened* and the grasshopper prove a burthen to those elastic limbs! But the soul itself, my child, is undecaying and immortal; and can smile calmly over the ruins of the body, in the grandeur of its own imperishability."

She paused, and as I gazed wistfully in her face, I thought that Ossian could never have seen such a countenance as Aunt Mercy's, when he said that age was "dark and unlovely," for to me she was still beautiful, in her piety and meekness, with the chastened memories of other years blending, as they now were, with the holiest hopes of Heaven.

"When I was young," continued she, "I was like you, the companion of an aged relative, though my mother was living; but having the charge of a large family, she was willing to yield to my grandmother's wishes, that I might be taken into her household, even as her own child. I was the youngest of the family, and had never been out, as it is called, into the world,

so I was contented in my new home, where I had leisure to indulge in my favorite amusement—reading. My grandmother, unfortunately, had a large library of ill-assorted works, a great portion of which were romances and plays. She never restrained me in my choice, saying she had always read every thing she liked, and had never been injured by this indiscriminate reading, and she saw no reason why children should be wiser than their grandmothers. She was fond of hearing me read aloud to her, and all the long winter evenings, while she plied her knitting needles, I amused her and delighted myself with the wildest and most extravagant productions. But there were some volumes containing scenes so highly wrought, which excited such a thrilling interest in my bosom, I could not read them to another. These I reserved for my secret perusal; and when summer built its green bowers, I used to conceal myself in their shades, and perusing alone these impassioned pages, forgetting every thing but the visions they inspired, I became a vain and idle dreamer. The realities of life were insipid to me; and I was happy only when breathing the atmosphere of the ideal world. My grandmother never reproved me for my wanderings. She did not seem to miss my companionship, for, in the genial season, she loved to sit in the open door, and look at the flowers as they opened to the sunbeams, and listen to the songs of the birds as they made their nests in the trees that shaded the walls. I had one brother, two or three years older than myself, who always visited me during his college vacations, and transformed our quiet

dwelling to a scene of gaiety and amusement. Arthur was a light-headed, frolicsome youth, with a temperament very different from mine. *He* loved to sport with the foam of the ocean; *I* to fathom the depths of its waves. And now, Fanny, look on me no longer. I would not waver in my purpose, and I cannot bear that wistful gaze; it melts me, and I would have my eyes dry and my heart firm.

“Poor Arthur came to us the last year of his collegiate term, accompanied by a classmate of whom he had often talked, Frederick Cleveland. I said he had often spoken of him; and to my romantic ear his name implied all those graces and accomplishments I had never yet seen embodied. Grave even to pensiveness; pale almost to feminine delicacy; yet with a deep-toned voice and manly figure, he formed a striking contrast to my merry, blooming, and boyish brother. Arthur pursued his accustomed sports, fishing and hunting; Cleveland soon learned to linger behind, finding more congeniality in my enthusiasm and poetry of feeling. He was a poet himself; and he loved to read his own strains to one who listened with an ear so rapt as mine. He was a naturalist; and as we walked together, he explained to me the wondrous laws of nature, and gave me enlarged and elevated views of the creating power. He was an astronomer and as we stood beneath the starry heavens, he directed my gaze to the planets walking in their brightness, and endeavored to carry my soul into the depths of infinity, and teach it to take in some faint glimpses of God’s unimaginable glory. Fanny, I thought not of my God,

but of him. I forgot the Creator in adoration of the creature he had made. He departed, and existence was a blank to me; or rather, it was filled with one image, one ever multiplying, yet never changing image. My first thought at morning was not an aspiration of gratitude to the Divine Being, whose wings of love had overshadowed and sheltered me during the darkness of night, but a remembrance of Cleveland. My last thought, when I closed my eyes in sleep, did not ascend to Him, in whose awful presence I might be ere the midnight hour, but lingered round one, a frail creature of the dust like myself. You asked me, Fanny, if love was sinful. Not that love which, emanating from a heart which, conscious of its weakness and its dependence on God, sees in the object of its affections, a being of clay, yet an heir of immortality; a traveller of time, whose goal is eternity; not that love which, purified from earthly fires, glows with a divine ardor, and mingles with the celestial flame that rises from the soul to the source of everlasting love and light. But the pagan maiden, who pours out her life-blood at the feet of her idol-god, is not more of an idolator than I was, the baptized daughter of a Christian mother.

"Winter glided slowly away. My grandmother's sight entirely failed, and I was compelled to become eyes to the blind, and also feet to the weary, for her increasing infirmities confined her to her arm-chair. I performed these duties, but with a listless spirit; and, could she have looked upon me, she must have known that my thoughts were wandering. At length spring

returned, and she had her arm-chair moved into the open air, and as the fragrance of the season floated round her, and its melodies breathed into her ear, she revived into child-like cheerfulness. The time for my brother's annual visit returned, and Cleveland once more accompanied him. Even now, when years gliding over years have dimmed the memories of the past, and religion, I trust, has sanctified them, I cannot recall those hours without a glow like that of sunshine, pervading my wasted being. But the gloom, the horror of thick darkness that followed! One day, as Cleveland and myself were sitting at the foot of an elm tree, reading from the same book, Arthur passed us with his gun in his hand, his green hunting pouch swung over his shoulder, and his dog bounding before him. He laughed, looked back, called Cleveland a *drone*, then went gaily on. How long he was gone I know not, for the happy take no note of hours; but the sun was nearly setting, when he returned by the same path. I felt a sensation of embarrassment that I had lingered so long, and, looking at Cleveland, I saw the color on his cheek was deepened. The sky was reddening with the clouds that generally gather around the setting sun, and their reflection gave a beauty and brightness to his face that I had never seen before. Arthur seemed animated with more than his usual vivacity. 'Cleveland,' said he, with mock gravity, 'that blush bespeaks the consciousness of guilt. I have long thought you a criminal, and you must now suffer the penalty due to your crimes. Die, then, base robber, without judge or jury.' Then, aiming his



gun like an experienced marksmen, his eye sparkling with mirth, he shot—and Cleveland fell."

Here Aunt Mercy paused, and a long silence ensued. I dared not look at her, as she thus bared the fountain of her grief. I felt as if the death shot had penetrated my own heart. I started at the sound of her voice when she again resumed her narrative, it was so hollow and broken.

"Yes! he fell by a brother's hand. I saw him extended at my feet, and the grass crimsoned with the blood that gushed from the wound. I saw Arthur dash down his gun, rush forward, and throwing himself on the bleeding body, exclaim, "Gracious Father! what have I done?" "Done!" cried I, pushing him away with frantic violence, and clasping the murdered Frederick in my arms, "Done! you have killed him—you have killed him;" and I reiterated the words till they became a piercing shriek, and the air was rent with my cries of agony. I remember how he looked—with what bloodless cheeks and lips he bent over him—what indescribable anguish and horror spoke from his eyes! I remember, too, how my blind old grandmother, roused by my shrieks,—came groping to the spot, and dabbled her hands unconsciously in the blood of the victim. It was she who cried, "he may yet be saved;" and Arthur flew for a physician, and dragged him to the very tree, and looked him in the face, while he sought the symptoms of that life which was gone for ever. My Fanny, I dare not describe the madness of despair that took possession of my soul. I rejected all human consolation; I sought no divine comforter;

I knew not that there was a balm in Gilead, or a heavenly Physician near. My poor grandmother tried to soothe my grief, but I turned away from her in bitterness. My brother attempted to approach me, but I fled from him as from a monster, and hid myself from his sight. He wrote to me, entreating me to forgive him. He painted the misery he endured, the remorse that was consuming him; and yet he was innocent, innocent of everything but levity, whose excess is criminal. He knew not, that the gun was loaded; for a boy, who was hunting like himself, had taken his rifle, which he had left for a few moments leaning against a tree, and substituted his own in its stead. It was an instrument of inferior value, though of similar appearance, and contained a heavy load. These circumstances were afterwards made known to him, and explained the mystery of Cleveland's death. Poor, unhappy Arthur! he was innocent, and yet I loathed him. I made a vow that I would never see him more. "Tell him," said I, "that I forgive him, but I can never live in his sight; I can never look upon him but as the destroyer of all I held dear." Finding me inexorable, he left me to my sullen and resentful sorrow, to seek friends more kind and pitying. My sole occupation, now, was to wander abroad, and seat myself under the elm tree which had witnessed the awful tragedy, and brood over its remembrance. Oh! how hard and selfish must have been my heart, that could have resisted the prayers and tears of my only brother; that could have turned from a doting grandmother, whose sightless eyes pleaded so painfully in his behalf; that



could have left her to the care of menials, instead of ministering to her declining age and smoothing her passage to the grave! But that hard heart was yet to be broken. The prophet's wand was near. I received a summons to come to my brother, who was dying. He raved for his sister; he could not die without seeing her once again. I felt like one waking from a terrible dream, in which the incubus had been brooding like a demon on the soul! A voice cried in my ear, "Thou too wilt be a murderer, less innocent than he, for thou knewest what thou wast doing." I obeyed the summons, but it was too late—he was dead! I saw him in his winding-sheet—the brother whom my unrelenting lips had vowed never to behold again; with his last breath he had called on my name, and prayed me to forgive him! I stood and gazed upon him with dry and burning eyes. The merry glance was dim and fixed; the glowing cheeks sunken and white; and the smiling lips closed for ever. I had hung over the corpse of my lover, my bosom had been moistened by the life drops that oozed from his own, and I thought I had drunk the cup of sorrow to its bitterest dregs. But I now learned that there were dregs more bitter still. Oh! the anguish of remorse; surely it is a foretaste of the undying worm, of the fire that never can be quenched; I could not bear its gnawings—its smothered, consuming flames; I was laid for months on a bed of sickness, in the same chamber where my poor Arthur breathed his last. I thought I was dying. I did not wish to live, but I recoiled from the dark futurity which stretched illimi-

tably before me; I shrunk from the idea of a holy and avenging God; I, the unforgiving, could I hope for forgiveness? I heard, as it were, the voice of the Lord saying, "The voice of thy brother's blood cries to me from the ground;" and I looked in vain for a city of shelter, where my soul could fly and live. I revealed to no one what was passing within. In the sullen secrecy of despair, I resolved to meet the doom which I believed to be irrevocable. Like the Spartan boy, who sat unmoved while the hidden animal was preying on his vitals, glorying in the pangs he had the fortitude to endure, I lay on my bed of torture silent and unmurmuring: feeling that the agonies I suffered, and which I expected to suffer, as long as Almighty vengeance could inflict them, or the immortal spirit bear, were a sufficient expiation for my cruelty and guilt. I shudder, as I recall the workings of my soul; I looked upon myself as the victim of an uncontrollable destiny, of an omnipotent vindictive Being, who, secure in his own impassibility, beheld with unpitying eye the anguish he caused. Had I created myself? Had I asked for the gift of existence? Was mine the breath which had warmed the senseless dust of the valley with passions so fiery and untameable; or mine the power to restrain their devastating course? As well might I be responsible for the ruin caused by elemental wrath. Oh! Fanny, had I died in this awful frame! Had my rebellious spirit then been ushered into the presence chamber of the King of kings, thus blasphemous and defying! But he who remembers we are dust, who, tempted once himself,

has pity on human weakness, gently withdrew his chastening hand. He raised me from my sick bed, and bid me live. I returned to my grandmother, who was now helpless as a child, and who wept like an infant when she heard my voice once more. The Bible, the only book in her library which I formerly passed over as too uninteresting to read, was now taken from the shelf and laid on the table by her bedside; on my knees I read its sacred pages. With no teacher but the Holy Spirit, I prosecuted the sublimest study in the universe, and as I studied, I felt a holy illumination pervading the darkened recesses of my soul. I saw myself in the mirror of eternal truth, in all my pride, rebellion, ingratitude, and heaven-daring hardness—and I loathed the picture. The more I abhorred myself, the more I adored the transcendent mercy of God, in prolonging my life for repentance and reformation. Like Mary, I arose and prostrated myself at the feet of the Saviour, bathed them with such tears of sorrow and love, it seemed as if my heart were melting in the fountain. I loved much; I felt as if I were forgiven; and ten thousand times ten thousand worlds would not purchase the hope even of that blessed forgiveness. My aged grandmother, too, placed as she was on the confines of two worlds, acknowledged that it had been reserved for that moment for the power and glory of religion to be manifested in her soul. She had hitherto rested in quietude, in the consciousness of a blameless life; but, about to appear in the presence of infinite purity as well as justice, the life which had seemed so spotless, assumed a

dark and polluted aspect, and she felt that if she ever joined the white-robed throng which surround the throne of the Everlasting, with branching palms in their hands, and hymns of glory on their lips, her raiments, like theirs, must be washed white in the blood of the Lamb. She died in peace, in hope, in faith, bequeathing me her little fortune, and, what was more precious still, her blessing. Blessed, for ever blessed, be the God of Israel, that I have been so gently led down the declivity of life, and that I can hear without dismay the rolling of the waves of Jordan, over which my aged feet must shortly pass; and, blessed too be his holy name, that he has brought you hither to minister to my infirmities, listen to my feeble counsels, and close my dying eyes."

Aunt Mercy rose, laid her hand for a moment solemnly on my head, and retired. I had wept without ceasing, during the latter part of her narrative, and long after I had laid my head on my pillow, I continued to weep. I wept for the ill-fated Cleveland; the unhappy Arthur; for Aunt Mercy, unrelenting and despairing, then, sorrowing and repenting; I wept to think what a world of tribulation I had entered, and prayed that I might never know the strength and tyranny of human passion. I had always thought it a fearful thing to die; but now it seemed more fearful still to live in a world so full of temptation, with hearts so prone to yield, surrounded by the shadows of time, which seem to us *realities*, and travelling on to an invisible world, which seems so shadowy and remote. The mystery of my being oppressed me, and I sought

to fathom what is unfathomable, till I remembered the sublime interrogation of Scripture, "Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection? He is higher than heaven—what canst thou do? Deeper than hell—what canst thou know?" I acknowledged my presumption, and, humbled and submissive, felt willing to wait the great and final day of God's revealing.

The next morning, Aunt Mercy requested me to accompany her in a walk. It was a mild, sunny morning, and the breath of spring, floating over the hills, was beginning to melt the frosts of winter. I thought she was going on an errand of charity, till she turned into a path, to which the leafless shrubbery on either side now gave a dreary appearance, and led me to a tree, whose bare spreading branches bent over a rustic bench, that was seen at its roots. I trembled, as I approached the spot, for I knew it was there the blood of Cleveland had been spilled. "This, then," thought I, "is the very tree that witnessed, almost simultaneously, the vows of love and the tears of agony."

"Yes," said Aunt Mercy, as if I had spoken aloud, "this is the spot where, more than fifty years ago, in the flower of youth, he fell! His body sleeps in the cemetery of his fathers, but this is his monument. Long as this aged tree remains, it will be sacred to the memory of Cleveland. Like that tree, now withered and shorn of its summer glories, I too stand a memento of his fate; but the spring will come to reclothe those naked branches, and pour the stream of vegetable life in their veins; and I too await the coming of that spring-time, whose flowers and verdure no after winter

can blight." As I looked around me, the conviction that all that I saw was associated with Aunt Mercy's youth; that here her aged grandmother had lived, and she herself grown old; that here too I might grow old and die, was very solemn. Aunt Mercy, who always seemed to read my thoughts, explained to me all the changes which had gradually taken place. The inroads of time had been constantly repaired, so that it was the same cottage in appearance that had sheltered her in childhood. She had respected her grandmother's peculiar habits, and continued them, perhaps, in many respects unconsciously. The white livery which at first startled me from its singularity, but to which my eye had become accustomed, had been adopted by her predecessor; when her failing sight found it difficult to distinguish objects, and every thing darkened round her. "And I love to look upon white," continued Aunt Mercy; "I love the winter's snow for its whiteness. It reminds me of the blood-washed robes of the saints."

I would have lingered near the spot hallowed by such deathless memories, but Aunt Mercy drew me away. I trembled for the effect of such excitement on one so aged. I thought her face looked paler than usual, and her step seemed less firm. I placed the easy chair for her on our return, and stood by her with an anxious countenance. "Fanny, my love," said she, pressing my hand in both hers, "I have laid bare my heart before you, but the curtain must now fall over it—never again to be lifted. I have done

with the past—God and eternity must now claim all my thoughts!”

Perhaps at some future hour, I may continue my own history, as it is connected with my sister Laura's and the close of Aunt Mercy's life—a life continued beyond the allotted period of existence.

### The Village Pastor's Wife.

WHAT impels me to take up my pen, compose myself to the act of writing, and begin the record of feelings and events which will inevitably throw a shadow over the character which too partial and misjudging affection once beheld shining with reflected lustre? I know not—but it seems to me, as if a divine voice whispered from the boughs that wave by my window, occasionally intercepting the sun's rays that now fall obliquely on my paper, saying that if I live for memory, I must not live in vain—and that, perchance, when I, too, lie beneath the willow that hangs over *his* grave, unconscious of its melancholy waving, a deep moral may be found in these pages, short and simple as they may be. Then be it so. It is humiliating to dwell on past errors—but I should rather welcome the humiliation, if it can be any expiation for my blindness, my folly—no! such expressions are too weak—I should say, my madness, my sin, my hard-hearted guilt.

It is unnecessary to dwell on my juvenile years. Though dependent on the bounty of an uncle, who had a large family of his own to support, every wish which vanity could suggest, was indulged as soon as expressed. I never knew a kinder, more hospitable, uncalculating being than my uncle. If his unsparing generosity had not experienced a counteracting influence in the vigilant economy of my aunt, he would

long since have been a bankrupt. She was never unkind to me; for I believe she was conscientious, and she had loved my mother tenderly. I was the orphan legacy of that mother, and consequently a sacred trust. I was fed and clothed like my wealthier cousins; educated at the same schools; ushered into the same fashionable society, where I learned that awkwardness was considered the only unpardonable offence, and that almost any thing might be said and done, provided it was said and done gracefully. From the time of our first introduction into what is called the world, I gradually lost ground in the affections of my aunt, for I unfortunately eclipsed my elder cousins in those outer gifts of nature and those acquired graces of manner, which, however valueless when unaccompanied by inward worth, have always exercised a prevailing, an irresistible influence in society. I never exactly knew why, but I was the favourite of my uncle, who seemed to love me better than even his own daughters, and he rejoiced at the admiration I excited, though often purchased at their expense. Perhaps the secret was this. They were of a cold temperament; mine was ardent, and whatever I loved, I loved without reserve, and expressed my affection with characteristic warmth and enthusiasm. I loved my indulgent uncle with all the fervour of which such a nature, made vain and selfish by education, is capable. Often, after returning from an evening party, my heart throbbing high with the delight of gratified vanity, when he would draw me toward him and tell me—with a most injudicious fondness, it is true—that

I was a thousand times prettier than the flowers I wore, more sparkling than the jewels, and that I ought to marry a prince or a nabob, I exulted more in his praise than in the flatteries that were still tingling in my ears. Even my aunt's coolness was a grateful tribute to my self-love—for was it not occasioned by my transcendancy over her less gifted daughters?

But why do I linger on the threshold of events, which, simple in themselves, stamped my destiny—for time, yea, and for eternity?

It was during a homeward journey, with my uncle, I first met him who afterwards became my husband. My whole head becomes sick and my whole heart faint, as I think what I might have been, and what I am. But I must forbear. If I am compelled at times to lay aside my pen, overcome with agony and remorse, let me pause till I can go on, with a steady hand, and a calmer brain.

Our carriage broke down—it was a common accident—a young gentleman on horseback, who seemed like ourselves, a traveller, came up to our assistance. He dismounted, proffered every assistance in his power, and accompanied us to the inn, which fortunately was not far distant, for my uncle was severely injured, and walked with difficulty, though supported by the stranger's arm and my own. I cannot define the feeling, but from the moment I beheld him, my spirit was troubled within me. I saw, at once, that he was of a different order of beings from those I had been accustomed to associate with; and there was something in the heavenly composure of his counte-

nance and gentle dignity of manner, that rebuked my restless desire for admiration and love of display. I never heard any earthly sound so sweet as his voice. Invisible communion with angels could alone give such tones to the human voice. At first, I felt a strange awe in his presence, and forgot those artificial graces, for which I had been too much admired. Without meaning to play the part of a hypocrite, my real disposition was completely concealed. During the three days we were detained, he remained with us; and aloof from all temptation to folly, the best traits of my character were called into exercise. On the morning of our departure, as my uncle was expressing his gratitude for his kindness, and his hope of meeting him in town, he answered—and it was not without emotion—"I fear our paths diverge too much, to allow that hope. Mine is a lowly one, but I trust I shall find it blest." I then, for the first time, learned that he was a minister—the humble pastor of a country village. My heart died within me. That this graceful and uncommonly interesting young man should be nothing more than an obscure village preacher—it was too mortifying. All my bright visions of conquest faded away. "We can never be any thing to each other," thought I. Yet as I again turned towards him, and saw his usually calm eye fixed on me with an expression of deep anxiety, I felt the conviction that I might be all the world to him. He was watching the effect of his communication, and the glow of excited vanity that suffused my cheek was supposed to have its origin from a purer source. I

was determined to enjoy the full glory of my conquest. When my uncle warmly urged him to accompany us home, and sojourn with us a few days, I backed the invitation, with all the eloquence my countenance was capable of expressing. Vain and selfish being that I was—I might have known that we differed from each other as much as the rays of the morning star from the artificial glare of the sky rocket. *He* drew his light from the fountain of living glory, *I* from the decaying fires of earth.

The invitation was accepted—and before that short visit was concluded, so great was the influence he acquired over me, while *I* was only seeking to gain the ascendancy over *his* affections, that I felt willing to give up the luxury and fashion that surrounded me, for the sweet and quiet hermitage he described, provided the sacrifice were required. I never once thought of the duties that would devolve upon me, the solemn responsibilities of my new situation. It is one of the mysteries of Providence, how such a being as myself could ever have won a heart like his. He saw the sunbeam playing on the surface, and thought that all was fair beneath. I did love him; but my love was a passion, not a principle. I was captivated by the heavenly graces of his manner, but was incapable of comprehending the source whence those graces were derived.

My uncle would gladly have seen me established in a style more congenial to my prevailing tastes, but gave his consent, as he said, on the score of his surpassing merit. My aunt was evidently more than



willing to have me married, while my cousins rallied me for falling in love with a country parson.

We were married. I accompanied him to the beautiful village of —. I became mistress of the parsonage. Never shall I forget the moment when I first entered this avenue, shaded by majestic elms; beheld these low, white walls, festooned with redolent vines; and heard the voice, which was then the music of my life, welcome me here, as Heaven's best and loveliest gift. How happy—how blest I might have been! and I *was* happy for awhile. His benign glance and approving smile were, for a short time, an equivalent for the gaze of admiration and strains of flattery to which I had been accustomed. I even tried, in some measure, to conform to his habits and tastes, and to cultivate the good-will of the plebeians and rustics who constituted a great portion of his parish. But the mind, unsupported by principle, is incapable of any steady exertion. Mine gradually wearied of the effort of assuming virtues, to which it had no legitimate claim. The fervour of feeling which had given a bluer tint to the sky, and a fairer hue to the flower, insensibly faded. I began to perceive defects in every object, and to wonder at the blindness which formerly overlooked them. I still loved my husband; but the longer I lived with him, the more his character soared above the reach of mine. I could not comprehend how one could be endowed with such brilliant talents and winning graces, and not wish for the admiration of the world. I was vexed with him for his meekness and humility, and would gladly have mingled,

if I could, the base alloy of earthly ambition with his holy aspirations after heaven. I was even jealous—I almost tremble while I write it—of the God he worshipped. I could not bear the thought, that I held a second place in his affections—though second only to the great and glorious Creator. Continually called from my side to the chamber of the sick, the couch of the dying, the dwelling of the poor and ignorant, I in vain sought to fill up the widening vacuum left, by becoming interested in the duties of my station. I could not do it. They became every day more irksome to me. The discontent I was cherishing, became more and more visible, till the mild and anxious eye of my husband vainly looked for the joyous smile that used to welcome his return.

It is true, there were many things I was obliged to tolerate, which must inevitably be distasteful to one educated with such false refinement as I have been. But I never reflected they must be as opposed to my husband's tastes as my own, and that Christian principle alone led him to the endurance of them. Instead of appreciating his angelic patience and forbearance, I blamed him for not lavishing more sympathy on me for trials which, though sometimes ludicrous in themselves, are painful from the strength of association.

The former minister of the village left a maiden sister as a kind of legacy to his congregation. My husband had been a protege and pupil of the good man, who, on his death-bed, bequeathed his people to the charge of this son of his adoption, and *him*, with equal tenderness and solemnity, to the care of



his venerable sister. She became a fixture in the parsonage, and to me a perpetual and increasing torment. The first month of our marriage she was absent, visiting some of her seventh cousins in a neighbouring town. I do not wish to exculpate myself from blame; but, if ever there was a thorn in human flesh, I believe I had found it in this inquisitive, gratuitously advising woman. I, who had always lived among roses, without thinking of briers, was doomed to feel this thorn, daily, hourly, goading me; and was constrained to conceal as much as possible the irritation she caused, because my husband treated her with as much respect, as if she were an empress. I thought Mr. L—— was wrong in this. Owing to the deep placidity of his own disposition, he could not realize what a trial such a companion was to a mercurial, indulged, self-willed being as myself. Nature has gifted me with an exquisite ear for music, and a discord always "wakes the nerve where agony is born." Poor Aunt Debby had a perfect mania for singing, and she would sit and sing for hours together, old-fashioned ballads and hymns of surprising length—scarcely pausing to take breath. I have heard aged people sing the songs of Zion, when there was most touching melody in their tones; and some of the warmest feelings of devotion I ever experienced, were awakened by these solemn, trembling notes. But Aunt Debby's voice was full of indescribable ramifications, each a separate discord—a sharp, sour voice, indicative of the natural temper of the owner. One Sunday morning, after she had been screeching one

of Dr. Watts' hymns, of about a hundred verses, she left me to prepare for church. When we met, after finishing our separate toilettes, she began her animadversions on my dress, as being too gay for a minister's wife. I denied the charge; for though made in the redundancy of fashion, it was of unadorned white.

"But what," said she, disfiguring the muslin folds with her awkward fingers, "what is the use of all these fandangles of lace? They are nothing but Satan's devices to lead astray silly women, whose minds are running after finery." All this I might have borne with silent contempt, for it came from Aunt Debby; but when she brought the authority of a Mrs. Deacon and a Mrs. Doelan of the parish, to prove that she was not the only one who found fault with the fashion of my attire, the indignant spirit broke its bounds; deference for age was forgotten in the excitement of the moment, and the concentrated irritation of weeks burst forth. I called her an impertinent, morose old maid, and declared that one or the other of us should leave the parsonage. In the midst of the paroxysm my husband entered—the calm of heaven on his brow. He had just left his closet, where he had been to seek the divine manna for the pilgrims it was his task to guide through the wilderness of life. He looked from one to the other, in grief and amazement. Aunt Debby had seated herself on his entrance, and began to rock herself backward and forward, and to sigh and groan—saying it was a hard thing to be called such hard names at her time of life, &c. I stood, my cheeks

glowing with anger, and my heart violently palpitating with the sudden effort at self-control. He approached me, took my hand, and said, "My dear Mary!" There was affection in his tone, but there was upbraiding, also; and drawing away my hand, I wept in bitterness of spirit. As soon as I could summon sufficient steadiness of voice, I told him the cause of my resentment, and declared, that I would never again enter a place, where I was exposed to ridicule and censure, and from those, too, so immeasurably my inferiors in birth and education. "Dearest Mary!" exclaimed he, turning pale from agitation, "you cannot mean what you say. Let not such trifles as these, mar the peace of this holy day. I grieve that your feelings should have been wounded; but what matters it what the world says of our outward apparel, if our souls are clothed with those robes of holiness, which make us lovely in our Maker's eyes? Let us go together to the temple of Him, whose last legacy to man was *peace*."

Though the bell was ringing its last notes, and though I saw him so painfully disturbed, I still resisted the appeal, and repeated my rash asseveration. The bell had pealed its latest summons, and was no longer heard. "Mary, must I go alone?" His hand was on the latch—there was a burning flush on his cheek, such as I had never seen before. My pride would have yielded—my conscience convicted me of wrong—I would have acknowledged my rashness, had not Aunt Debby, whom I thought born to be my evil spirit, risen with a long-drawn sigh, and taken

his arm preparatory to accompanying him. "No," said I, "you will not be alone. You need not wait for me. In Aunt Debby's company, you cannot regret mine."

Surely my heart must have been steeled, like Pharaoh's, for some divine purpose, or I never could have resisted the mute anguish of his glance, as he closed the door on this cold and unmerited taunt. What hours of wretchedness I passed in the solitude of my chamber! I magnified my sufferings into those of martyrdom, and accused Mr. L—— of not preparing me for the trials of my new situation. Yet, even while I reproached him in my heart, I was conscious of my injustice, and felt that I did not suffer alone. It was the first time any other than words of love and kindness had passed between us, and it seemed to me, that a barrier was beginning to rise, that would separate us forever. When we again met, I tried to retain the same cold manner and averted countenance, but he came unaccompanied by my tormentor, and looked so dejected and pale, my petulance and pride yielded to the reign of better feelings. I had even the grace to make concessions, which were received with such gratitude and feeling, I was melted into goodness, transient but sincere. Had Aunt Debby remained from us, all might yet have been well; but after having visited awhile among the parish, she returned; and her presence choked the blossoms of my good resolutions. I thought she never forgave the offending epithet I had given her in the moment of passion. It is far from my intention, in delineating peculiarities like

hers, to throw any opprobrium on that class of females who, from their isolated and often unprotected situation, are peculiarly susceptible to the shafts of unkindness or ridicule. I have known those, whose influence seemed as diffusive as the sunshine and gentle as the dew; at whose approach the ringlets of childhood would be tossed gaily back, and the wan cheek of the aged lighted up with joy; who had devoted the glow of their youth, and the strength of their prime, to acts of filial piety and love, watching the waning fires of life, as the vestal virgins the flame of the altar. Round such beings as these the beatitudes cluster; and yet, the ban of unfeeling levity is passed upon the maiden sisterhood. But I wander from my path. It is not *her* history I am writing, so much as my own; which, however deficient in incident, is not without its moral power.

I experienced one source of mortification, which I have not yet mentioned; it may even seem too insignificant to be noticed, and yet it was terribly gratifying to my aristocratic feelings. Some of our good parishioners were in the habit of lavishing attentions so repugnant to me, that I did not hesitate to refuse them; which I afterwards learned gave great mortification and displeasure. I would willingly accept a basket of fragrant strawberries, or any of the elegant bounties of nature; but when they offered such plebeian gifts as a shoulder of pork or mutton, a sack of grain or potatoes, *I* invariably returned my cold thanks and declined the honour. Is it strange that I should become to them an object of aversion, and

that they should draw comparisons, humbling to me, between their idolized minister and his haughty bride?

My uncle and cousins made me a visit, not long after my rupture with Aunt Debby, which only served to render me more unhappy. My uncle complained so much of my altered appearance, my faded bloom and languid spirits, I saw that it gave exquisite pain to Mr. L——, while my cousins, now in their day of power, amused themselves continually with the old-fashioned walls of the house, the obsolete style of the furniture, and my humdrum mode of existence. Had I possessed one spark of heavenly fire, I should have resented all this as an insult to him whom I had solemnly vowed to love and honour. These old-fashioned walls should have been sacred in my eyes. They were twice hallowed—hallowed by the recollections of departed excellence and the presence of living holiness. Every leaf of the magnificent elms that overshadowed them, should have been held sacred, for the breath of morning and evening prayer had been daily wafted over them, up to the mercy-seat of heaven.

I returned with my uncle to the metropolis. It is true, he protested that he would not, could not leave me behind—and that change of scene was absolutely necessary to the restoration of my bloom, and Mr. L—— gave his assent with apparent cheerfulness and composure. But I knew—I felt, that his heart bled at my willingness, my wish to be absent from him, so soon after our marriage. He told me to consult my

own happiness, in the length of my visit, and that he would endeavour to find a joy in solitude, in thinking of mine. "Oh!" said one of my cousins, with a loud laugh, "you can never feel solitary, where Aunt Debby is——"

Behold me once more 'mid the scenes congenial to my soul—a gay flower, sporting over the waves of fashion, thoughtless of the caverns of death beneath. Again the voice of flattery fell meltingly on my ear; and while listening to the siren, I forgot those mild, admonishing accents, which were always breathing of heaven—or if I remembered them at all, they came to my memory like the grave rebuke of Milton's cherub—severe in their beauty. Yes, I did remember them when I was alone; and there are hours when the gayest will feel desolately alone. I thought of him in his neglected home; him, from whom I was gradually alienating myself for his very perfections, and accusing conscience avenged his rights. Oh! how miserable, how poor we are, when unsupported by our own esteem! when we fear to commune with our own hearts, and doubly tremble to bare them to the all-seeing eye of our Maker! My husband often wrote me most affectionately. He did not urge my return, but said, whenever I felt willing to exchange the pleasures of the metropolis for the seclusion of the hermitage, his arms and his heart were open to receive me. At length I received a letter, which touched those chords that yet vibrated to the tones of nature and feeling. He seldom spoke of himself—but in this, he mentioned having been very ill, though then convalescent.

"Your presence, my Mary," said he, "would bring healing on its wings. I fear, greatly fear, I have doomed you to unhappiness, by rashly yielding to the influence of your beauty and winning manners, taking advantage of your simplicity and inexperience, without reflecting how unfitted you were, from natural disposition and early habits, to be a fellow-labourer in so humble a portion of our Master's vineyard. Think not, my beloved wife, I say this in reproach. No! 'tis in sorrow, in repentance, in humiliation of spirit. I have been too selfish. I have not shown sufficient sympathy for the trials and vexations to which, for me, you have been exposed. I have asked to receive too much. I have given back too little. Return then, my Mary; you were created for nobler purposes than the beings who surround you. Let us begin life anew. Let us take each other by the hand as companions for time—but pilgrims for eternity. Be it mine to guard, guide and sustain—yours, to console, to gild and comfort." In a postscript he added:

"I am better now—a journey will restore me. I will soon be with you, when I trust we will not again be parted."

My heart was not of rock. It was moved—melted. I should have been less than human, to have been untouched by a letter like this. All my romantic love, but so recently chilled, returned; and I thought of his image as that of an angel's. Ever impulsive, ever actuated by the passion of the moment, I made the most fervent resolutions of amendment, and panted

for the hour when we should start for, together, this immortal goal! Alas! how wavering were my purposes—how ineffective my holy resolutions!

There was a numerous congregation gathered on the Sabbath morn, not in the simple village church, but the vaulted walls of a city dome. A stranger ascended the pulpit. Every eye was turned on him and none wandered. He was pallid, as from recent indisposition; but there was a fitting glow on his cheek, the herald of coming inspiration. There was a divine simplicity, a sublime fervour, an abandonment of self, a lifting up of the soul to heaven, an indescribable and spiritual charm pervading his manner, that was acknowledged by the breathless attention of a crowded audience, composed of the wealth and fashion of the metropolis. And I was there, the proudest, the happiest of the throng. That gifted being was my husband. I was indemnified for all past mortifications, and looked forward to bright years of felicity, not in the narrow path we had heretofore travelled, but a wider, more brilliant sphere. My imagination placed him at the head of that admiring congregation; and I saw the lowly flock he had been lately feeding, weeping, unpitied, between the porch and the altar.

Before we bade farewell to my uncle, I had abundant reason to believe my vision would soon be realized. The church was then without a pastor. No candidate had as yet appeared in whom their opinions or affections were united. They were enthusiastic in their admiration of Mr. L——, and protested against

the obscurity of his location. With such hopes gilding the future, I left the metropolis with a cheerfulness and elasticity of spirits, which my husband hailed as a surety for long years of domestic felicity. I would gladly linger here awhile. I fear to go on. You have followed me so far with a kind of complaisant interest, as a poor, vain, weak young creature, whose native defects have been enhanced by education, and who has unfortunately been placed in a sphere she is incapable of adorning. The atmosphere is too pure, too rarified. Removed at once from the valley of sin to the mount of holiness, I breathe with difficulty the celestial air, and pant for more congenial reagions. Must I proceed? Your compassion will turn to detestation: yet I cannot withdraw from the task I have imposed on myself. It is an expiatory one; and oh, may it be received as such!

It was scarcely more than a week after our return. All had been peace and sunshine: so resolved was I to be all that was lovely and amiable. I even listened with apparent patience to Aunt Debby's interminable hymns, and heard some of her long stories, the seventy-seventh time, without any manifest symptom of vexation. It was about sunset. We sat together in the study, my husband and myself, watching the clouds as they softly rolled towards the sinking sun, to dip their edges in his golden beams. The boughs of the elms waved across the window, giving us glimpses of the beautiful vale beyond, bounded by the blue outline of the distant hills. Whether it was the warm light reflected on his face, or the glow of

the heart suffusing it, I know not; but I never saw his usually pale features more radiantly lighted up than at that moment. A letter was brought to him. I leaned over his shoulder while he opened it. From the first line I understood its import: it was the realization of my hopes. The offer was there made—more splendid, more liberal than I had dared to anticipate. I did not speak: but with cheeks burning and hands trembling with eagerness and joy, I waited till he had perused it. He still continued silent. Almost indignant at his calmness, I ejaculated his name in an impatient tone; when he raised his eyes from the paper and fixed them on me. I read there the death-blow of my hopes. They emitted no glance of triumph: there was sorrow, regret, humility, and love—but I looked in vain for more. “I am sorry for this,” said he, “for your sake, my dear Mary. It may excite wishes which can never be realized. No! let us be happy in the lowlier sphere, in which an all-wise Being has marked my course. I cannot deviate from it.” “Cannot!” repeated I: “say, rather, you will not.” I could not articulate more. The possibility of a refusal on his part had never occurred to me. I was thunderstruck. He saw my emotion—and, losing all his composure, rose and crushed the letter in his hand. “I could not if I would, accept this,” he cried; “and, were my own wishes to be alone consulted, I would not, were I free to act. But it is not so. I am bound to this place, by a solemn promise, which cannot be broken. Here, in this very house, it was made, by the dying bed of

the righteous, who bequeathed the people he loved to *my charge—me*, the orphan he had protected and reared. ‘Never leave them, my son,’ said the expiring saint—‘never leave the lambs of my flock to be scattered on the mountains.’ I pledged my word, surrounded by the solemnities of death: yea, even while his soul was taking its upward flight. It is recorded, and cannot be recalled.”

Did I feel the sacredness of the obligation he revealed? Did I venerate the sanctity of his motives, and admit their authority? No! Totally unprepared for such a bitter disappointment, when I seemed touching the summit of all my wishes, I was maddened—reckless. I upbraided him for having more regard to a dead guardian, who could no longer be affected by his decision, than for a living wife. I threatened to leave him to the obscurity in which he was born, and return to the friends who loved me so much better than himself. Seeing him turn deadly pale at this, and suddenly put his hand on his heart, I thought I had discovered the spring to move his resolution, and determined that I would not let it go. I moved towards the door, thinking it best to leave him a short time to his own reflections, assured that love must be victorious over conscience. He made a motion as if to detain me, as I passed—then again pressed his hand on his heart. That silent motion—never, never can I forget it!

“Are you resolved on this?” asked he, in a low, very hoarse tone of voice. “Yes, if you persist in your refusal. I leave you to decide.” I went into



the next room. I heard him walk a few moments, as if agitated and irresolute—then suddenly stop. I then heard a low, suppressed cough, but to this he was always subject, when excited, and it caused no emotion. Yet, after remaining alone for some time, I began to be alarmed at the perfect stillness. A strange feeling of horror came over me. I remembered the deadly paleness of his countenance, and the cold dew gathered fast and thick on my brow. I recollected, too, that he had told me of once having bled at the lungs, and of being admonished to shun every predisposing cause to such a malady. Strange, that after such an entire oblivion of every thing but self, these reflections should have pressed upon me with such power, at that moment. I seemed suddenly gifted with second sight, and feared to move, lest I should see the vision of my conscience embodied. At length, Aunt Debby opened the door, and for the first time rejoicing in her sight, I entreated her to go into the library, with an earnestness that appalled her. She did go—and her first sharp scream drew me to her side. There, reclined upon the sofa, motionless, lifeless—his face white as a snow-drift, lay my husband; his neckcloth and vest saturated with the blood that still flowed from his lips. Yes, he lay there—lifeless, dead, dead! The wild shriek of agony and remorse pierced not his unconscious ear. He was dead, and I was his murderer. The physician who was summoned, pronounced my doom. From violent agitation of mind, a blood vessel had been broken, and instant death had ensued. Weeks of frenzy, months of despair,

succeeded—of black despair. Nothing but an almighty arm thrown around my naked soul, held me back from the brink of suicide. Could I have believed in annihilation—and I wrestled with the powers of reason to convince myself that in the grave, at least, I should find rest. I prayed but for rest—I prayed for oblivion. Night and day the image of that bleeding corpse was before me. Night and day a voice was ringing in my ears, "*Thou hast murdered him!*" My sufferings were so fearful to witness, the at first compassionate neighbours deserted my pillow, justifying themselves by the conviction that I merited all that I endured.

My uncle and aunt came when they first heard the awful tidings, but unable to support my raving distress, left me—after providing every thing for my comfort—with the injunction that as soon as I should be able to be removed, to be carried to their household. And whose kind, unwearied hand smoothed my lonely pillow, and held my aching brow? Who, when wounded reason resumed her empire, applied the balm of Gilead and the oil of tenderness; led me to the feet of the divine Physician, prayed with me and for me, wept with me and over me, nor rested till she saw me clinging to the cross, in lowliness of spirit, with the seal of the children of God in my forehead, and the joy of salvation in my soul? It was Aunt Debby. The harsh condemner of the fashions of this world, the stern reprover of vanity and pride, the uncompromising defender of godliness and truth; she who in my day of prosperity was the cloud, in the night of sorrow was my light and consolation. The



rough bark was penetrated and the finer wood beneath gave forth its fragrance. Oh! how often, as I have heard her, seated by my bedside, explaining in a voice softened by kindness, the mysteries of holiness, and repeating the promises of mercy, have I wondered, that I, who had turned a deaf ear to the same truths, when urged upon me with all an angel's eloquence, should listen with reverence to accents from which I had heretofore turned in disgust! Yet at times, there seemed a dignity in her tones; her harsh features would light up with an expression of devout ecstasy, and I marvelled at the transforming power of Christianity. Well may I marvel! I would not now, for the diadem of the east, exchange this sequestered hermitage for the halls of fashion—these hallowed shades for the canopies of wealth—or the society of the once despised and hated Aunt Debby, for the companionship of flatterers. I see nothing but thorns where once roses blushed. The voice of the charmer has lost its power, though "it charm never so wisely." My heart lies buried in the tomb on which the sunlight now solemnly glimmers—my hopes are fixed on those regions from whence those rays depart. Had he only lived to forgive me—to know my penitence and agony—but the last words that ever fell on his ear from my lips, were those of passion and rebellion—the last glance I ever cast on him, was proud and upbraiding.

The sketch is finished—memory overpowers me.

## Thanksgiving Day.

I WAS travelling merrily along, in a snug, green sleigh, wrapped in buffalo skins, rejoicing in the prospect of a comfortable night's rest, in the still village which I saw peeping over the hill I was just ascending. It was a clear, cold, bracing winter's day. The ground was covered with spotless, shining snow, that made the eyes ache from its intense whiteness, and the air had those little, bright, cutting particles of frost, that glance like a razor across the nose and chin.

"How charmingly I shall sleep to-night," said I to myself, nodding in fancy at the very thought, "when I reach that hospitable looking inn, whose sign-post creaks so invitingly in the wind! How refreshing a hot cup of coffee, and light, smoking muffins will taste, after riding so far in the sharp, hungry air!" Regaling myself with this vision of anticipated comfort, I suffered the reins to hang a little too loosely: my horse, who was probably indulging in *his* reveries of oats, and hay, and a warm crib, made a kind of off-hand, sliding step, and with a most involuntary jump, I vaulted at once into a bed of a very different nature from the one upon which my imagination was dwelling. It was some time before I recovered from the stunning effects of my extemporaneous agility; but when I rose and shook off the snow-flakes from my great-coat, I heard the sound of my horse's bells

at a respectable distance; and I had to walk speedily, and limpingly too, to the next tavern, before whose door I intended to have made such a triumphant flourish. There, I arrived at the mortifying conviction, that my sleigh was broken, that my horse had run, head first, against the shaft of another sleigh, and wounded himself in such a manner, that I should probably be detained several days on my journey. I felt quite stiff and lame the next day, but my landlady—who was a good little bustling woman, walking about so briskly that the border of her cap flew back and lay flat on her head as she moved—gave me so many warm lotions and doses, that towards evening, I felt as if I had recovered my wonted activity. She advised me not to leave the room that day, “as it would be a thousand pities, if I coted cold, after such a marcfiful deliverance.” The scene from abroad was too tempting, however, for my philosophy. They may rave about the beauties of a moonlight night in summer—a night of shadows, bloom and flowers; singing birds and singing rills—but it cannot be compared to the one I then gazed upon—it was so dazzlingly bright!—the virgin snow looked so calm and holy in the clear light that mantled it. The first idea it suggested was a solemn one. It lay so cold and still, it reminded me of the winding-sheet of nature, till the almost supernatural radiance that sparkled from its surface, recalled to the imagination those spotless robes of glory, which are described as the future garments of the righteous. I stood with my arms meditatively folded, absorbed in these reflec-

tions, till the stars twinkled so kindly, with such sweet, beckoning lustre, I could not resist the temptation of going abroad. I rambled awhile down the street, when, catching the echo of a gay laugh, and an occasional jovial shout, on the cold, still air, I turned in the direction of the sound, and soon found myself near a boisterous, busy little group, who were engaged in the delightful amusement of sliding down hill. I did not wish to disturb their gaiety, and stopping in the shade of a high stone wall, close to the spot, watched them as they stood on the brow of the slope, preparing to make the grand descent. There were girls and boys, without hats, or bonnets, or cloaks—their cheeks looking so rosy, and their eyes so bright, it made your own wink to look at them. About half a dozen little girls were wedged closely together on a hand-sled, the handle of which was turned back and held by one who sat in the middle, in the capacity of charioteersman, and one who sat on the right hand, held a stick, which she occasionally stuck in the snow to pilot them on their way. There was one girl taller and larger than the rest, who seemed to take a kind of superintendence of the band. I never saw such a personification of health, bloom, and rustic beauty. Her hair, which was perfectly black, hung about her shoulders, as if she had just shaken out a confining comb; her face was lighted up with such a living glow of animation, it made one feel a sensation of warmth and comfort to gaze on her; and then her blithe voice rang so musically on the ear, it gave the heart a quicker, gladder

bound to hear it. Just as they were about to start on their downward career, there came a dismal screeching from a neighbouring farm yard, that jarred most discordantly with the merriment of the scene. "Oh!" said one of the little girls, in a doleful tone, "the poor hens and chickens! What a dreadful, cruel thing it is to kill 'em so for Thanksgiving—just too, as they get nicely to roosting! I won't touch a bit of chicken-pie to-morrow—you see if I do." "Do you hear her!" started half a dozen at once; "she sha'n't have any Thanksgiving, shall she? And don't you pity the pumpkins, and the apples, and cranberries, Mary? And don't you think it hurts them to be cut, and pared, and stemmed!" Here the voices were drowned in peals of superior laughter. "Never mind, little Mary," interrupted the kind, glad accents of the elder girl—"I love you all the better for being pitiful, and so they all do, if they do laugh at you." I gathered from this childish, but moral discourse, that the next day was to be Thanksgiving—that good, old-fashioned New England festival, and was exceedingly pleased at the idea of witnessing the hilarity of the village on so interesting an anniversary. I recollected that I had seen, or rather heard, most marvellous preparations going on at the inn, pounding, and stirring, and rolling, and beating, and chopping, and various other mysterious sounds.

Now, off they go—faster and faster—the little sled glides like a fairy boat over a moonlit wave: now it shoots like a falling star near the foot of the hill. A shout from above—but, alas! a cry of distress from

below! The triumphal vehicle was overturned, and the compassionate little Mary taken up writhing with pain. "Poor, dear Mary!" exclaimed the pretty, black-eyed lassie, bending anxiously over her; "what is the matter?" "Oh, I don't know," answered the poor child; "but it hurts so bad!" Grieved at the accident that had checked their innocent glee, I immediately offered my services to carry the little sufferer wherever they should direct, an offer which was accepted with readiness and gratitude. Fearing she had broken a limb, I bore her with great tenderness and care to her father's house, which was indicated by her elder sister, the pretty girl I admired so much. It is unnecessary to dwell on the commotion of the family, upon the sudden entrance of a stranger under such circumstances. Every body knows what a bustle is. Let those who love such scenes, seek for a description elsewhere. I wish to say a few words of the good doctor of the village, who speedily arrived—a man, who, "take him all in all, we ne'er shall look upon his like again." He was dressed in a long, white, tight-bodied great-coat—a broad-brimmed white hat, with a pair of huge saddlebags on his left arm, and a pair of huge spectacles approaching the extremity of a long, thin nose. He walked directly towards the table, without looking to the right or left; took off his hat, laid down his saddlebags, hemmed—then walked straight to the fire, sat down, and looked wisely into it, with his long hands resting on his knees. "Oh, doctor!" said the anxious mother, "do look at the poor child, and see what is the mat-

ter." "I'll pass my judgment directly," said he, weighing his words as he uttered them. At last, after a great many preliminaries, he "passed his judgment," that the child had dislocated her collar-bone—set it with greater expedition than I expected, resumed his saddlebags and hat, and walked directly out of the house, without looking to the right or left. Surely, if ever mortal man pursued a steady, undeviating course in the line of duty, it was Doctor M. And never was mortal man more venerated for wisdom and skill. It was almost believed he held the issues of life and death in his hands, and his "judgments" were never disputed. It is strange there are so many inveterate talkers in the world, when a few words, slowly uttered, invariably establish a reputation for superior sagacity. Let me do justice to the good doctor before I leave him. They said, when once you penetrated the hard, cocoa-nut shell of his manners, you met the sweet flow of the milk of *human kindness*, warm from the best of human hearts.

The family were so grateful for my attention, that they invited me to come and partake of a Thanksgiving dinner with them—an invitation I gladly accepted, especially as Lucy, my black-eyed favourite, was the elder daughter of the household, and backed the request with a glance, that flashed as brightly over me as the pine-knot blaze that was glowing in the chimney.

Thanksgiving morning dawned—clear, dazzling, and cold. The sun came forth like a bridegroom from the east, unconscious of the slaughtered victims,

whose heads lay reeking in the poultry-yard, unconscious of his un pitying beams. Thanksgiving day! What "volumes of meaning" in that little phrase! A day when man makes a covenant of gratitude with his Maker for the free bounties of the year; when the fragrant incense of the heart rises up warm and fresh, above earth's cold, wintry mantle, sweeter than the aroma of summer flowers, and mingles with the odours of Paradise! I went that morning to the village church—a plain, modest building, distinguished by a tall, white spire, that arrested the first and last glances of the magnificent eye of the universe. The village pastor—what endearing associations cluster around that name!—stood in the act of prayer, as I entered: I caught the sound of his voice, and it filled me with venerated sensations. It had that deep, full, organ sound, which breathes so eloquently of soul; and as it rose with the fervour of his feelings, and rolled through the arch of the simple, but heaven-dedicated walls, I felt my spirit as irresistibly borne along on these waves of sound, towards the ocean of eternity, as the fallen leaf upon the billowy sea. I never heard such a voice in my life. "How," thought I, gazing in wonder on his evangelical face, pale, but illumined with the glow of devotion,—“how came such a man here?” Towards the close of the prayer, the deep, majestic tones of adoration and praise gradually lowered to the softer accents of humility and love. He sat down; there was a hush, as if the Spirit of God had descended and was brooding over the abysses of the human heart. I wish I were not limited to a

sketch, that I might dwell long on this meek, richly-gifted apostle of our divine religion. Never before had Christianity seemed to me so lovely and august. His sermon was the most eloquent I ever heard—fraught with glowing images, with earnest, affecting, and energetic exhortations. I felt as if I had been a monster of ingratitude, and I made a vow to myself, to live hereafter a wiser and a better man. I fear you will think I did not fulfil my vow, when I passed the succeeding scenes. Yes, I must descend from the holy mount of prayer and praise, to the simple, heartfelt socialities of a village life. Imagine me, then, seated at a long table, covered with spotless linen, and groaning with unutterable comforts, and around that table three generations gathered. "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." There sat the grandfather and grandmother, their brows whitened with the harvest of life, ready to be gathered into the heavenly garner: then the respectable farmer and matron, the heads of the household, in the quietude of conscious competency and domestic happiness; then the children, from my pretty Lucy, down to a little chubby, golden-haired, blue-eyed thing that peeped from her grandfather's knee, like a violet from a snow-bank. The old man raised his feeble hand, and every head was bowed, as, with a palsied, difficult voice, he called down a blessing on the bounteous board. Even the infant on his knee clasped its little hands, and looked reverently in its grandfather's face, as if it were conscious it had something to do with heaven. After a decent pause, the business of grati-

tude commenced. The roasted turkey—the lord of the table; the chickens, roast beef, chicken pie, with its circumvolutions of paste, salient angles, and loopholes, were first to be demolished, with the accompanying vegetables and relishes, the bright green pickles, garnished with the scarlet barberries. Then came the plum puddings, and mince pies, and apples, and custard, and cranberry-tarts; and pumpkin pudding, and apple custard: and it would have been considered the height of ingratitude to have refused one of these dainties. A triangular piece of each pie was put upon a plate, till they made a perfect wheel of party-coloured spokes. Lucy sat by my side and received my gallant compliments, with a mingled bashfulness and roguery of expression, which was completely bewitching to me. I was what they called a genteel, good-looking young man, and had a tolerably good opinion of my own powers of pleasing. I thought there could be no possible harm in flirting a little with the pretty rustic. I was incited to this by the evident discomposure of a youth, who sat on the opposite side of the table, whose countenance presented the oddest mixture of displeasure, fear, and shame-facedness I ever witnessed. He had really a fine face, but it was so disguised by these different expressions, it had something inexpressibly ludicrous in it. He sat at a distance from the table, with his feet on the rounds of the chair, so that he was obliged to reach forward his head and arms most lengtheningly; and he kept his eyes fixed so ruefully, yet indignantly on Lucy and myself, that he could

not find the right path from his plate to his mouth. Lucy seemed saucily to enjoy his awkwardness and confusion, and, true to her sex, triumphed in her power. At last, seeing that he had laid down his knife and fork, over his untouched pie, she asked with real interest and kindness of tone,

"William, why don't you eat? I am afraid you are sick."

"I haven't got any appetite," said he, huskily.

"You've lost it very suddenly," said she, archly.

At this, he cast at me a glance of dim fierceness, so irresistibly comical, I had recourse to a convenient fit of coughing, to hide the rising laugh. Lucy caught the infection, and unable to resist the impulse, laughed outright. The poor fellow started on his feet, set back his chair, with a tremendous noise, snatched up his hat, and marched directly out of the room.

"Oh, Lucy, what have you done!" said her mother reproachfully.

"Lucy, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" uttered her rougher father.

I looked at Lucy. Her face was the colour of crimson, and an expression of alarm struggled with her scarcely conquered mirth. I began to think I had carried matters a little too far, and that Lucy was rather too much of a coquette. I was sorry for the pain I had given his honest heart, and for the confusion into which I had thrown the good people. She was evidently ashamed of having me suppose that he had any right to be displeased, and put up her pretty lip, and said she was sure she did not care:

"he was nothing to her—he had no business to look so funny." My thoughts were diverted into a new channel, by a side conversation which was going on by the couch of little Mary, (which was nicely made up in a corner of the room, within full view of the dainties of the day,) between her and a cousin of the same age, upon the comparative merits of the different pies their mothers had made, their superior quality and quantity. At last the dispute became very warm—their tones grew angry, and every little sentence began with "I say."

What a lesson might the proud wrestlers in the great arena of life take from these Lilliputian disputants! They rested their claims to superiority upon the majority of pies made in their households, and each pie, in their eyes, was of more value and importance than the star of the legion of honour. It may seem a trifling theme; but many a time since that hour, when I have heard the high and mighty, in mind and name, contend for the poor straws of earthly distinction, I have thought of the eager, positive, triumphant assertion, "*my mother made the most pies.*"

To return to my rustic coquette. As evening approached, her vivacity was rather upon the wane: she cast restless glances towards the door: at the sound of the merry, jingling bells she ran to the windows, and looked earnestly out, as if looking for something, whose coming she watched in vain. "He won't come, Lucy," whispered her sister to her. "I don't believe he will ever come near you again. You can't go to



the ball." "I don't care," answered Lucy; but as she turned away, I saw tears gathering in her bright eyes, which belied the indifference of her words. I understood at once the state of the case. This awkward youth was probably a sweetheart of hers, who, when free from the demon spell of jealousy, was very likely a glass of fashion to the village dandies. There was to be a Thanksgiving ball, and he was to have been her partner. In a paroxysm of jealousy he had left her in the lurch; and the prettiest lassie in the country was doomed to the penalty of staying at home, because she could not get her beau!

This would never do. As I had been the bane, I resolved to act *the part* of the antidote. I managed to introduce the subject of the ball; said there was nothing in the world I should be so much pleased to witness, and if she would allow me the honour of attending her there, I should be extremely happy, &c., &c. Her countenance became radiant with animation. From what bitter mortification I had saved her! What a noble revenge would she inflict on her plebeian swain!

I have not leisure to tell the hows—the whys—the wherefores, and wherebys—we are in the ball-room, on Thanksgiving eve—a New England ball-room. If a son or daughter of the land of pilgrims should read this sketch, who has ever been so blessed as to witness such a scene, they behold it at this moment in their mind's eye. Scrape go the fiddles—pat go the feet—the girls, all in pure, simple white, with here and there a gay ribbon and fluttering

flower, scamper down the dance: the young men, with stiff, starched collars, and shining metal buttons, and heavy heels, foot it briskly after.

The floor has a noble spring, and those who are sitting around, spectators of the exhilarated actors, feel their feet keeping time involuntarily, and their heads nodding, before they know what they are doing. What would my patrician friends have said to see me cutting the pigeon-wing, and taking the double shuffle with the superfluous animation that I exercised that evening! Yet I would not have been ashamed of my sweet partner, even in the heart of the metropolis. She did look lovely. To be sure, her sleeves were not twice as large as her body—her shoulders were where nature placed them—and, worse than all, she wore round-toed shoes! But her robe was as white as the snow on which the moonbeams shone, and her face as blooming as the red rose that decorated her brow. I was really half in love with her, and I rattled more nonsense in her ear than her unsophisticated imagination ever dreamed of. Her vanity was greatly excited, for I was the *gentleman* of the party, and the young girls looked upon her conquest with envy—that mildew which falls on the sweet blossom of the valley as well as the exotic of the greenhouse. At length the tide of youthful spirits began to ebb: the bounding step softened down into a kind of weary slide: the lights looked dim, and a sleepy cloud floated over the young, starry eyes shining around me. Lucy never opened her lips while I was escorting her home.



She seemed to be communing with her own conscience, which probably gave her some remorseless twinges and regretful pangs. For my own part, the excitement of the occasion being over, I felt a little sheepish for the part I had taken.

The next morning, every thing being ready for my departure, I called to bid farewell to Lucy, with the commendable resolution of speaking to her frankly on the subject of her jealous love, and recommending to her reconciliation and forgiveness. I found her with an open letter in her lap, the living carnations of her cheeks all withered and pale, and tears that seemed wrung by agony, streaming from her late glad eyes.

"What has happened, Lucy?" said I, trembling with indefinite apprehension. She tried to speak, but could not; and then put the letter into my hand. I read it, and wished I had been shot. I will transcribe it as faithfully as my memory allows, and I think I remember every word of it, for it seemed stamped upon my mind as with a red-hot iron.

"DEAR LUCY,—

"I'm going away—a great way off—and I don't want to go without letting you know that I forgive you the wrong you've done me. Oh, Lucy! if you only knew how it cut me to the heart, when you laughed at and made game of me, before that fine new sweetheart of yours, you never would have done it; for he never can love you as well as I have done; for he's known you but a day as 'twere, and I—we've

known each other from children, and I've loved you better than any thing else in the world ever since I knew how. I'm going to sea, to sail on the great waters, and perhaps I may make my grave in them; for I don't feel as if I had any thing to live for now. I always had a kind of longing for the sea; but I hated to leave you behind. It's no matter now. If I thought you'd be sorry, I think I'd be willing to die. Good bye, Lucy,—I hope you'll be happy as long as you live.

"No more at present from your faithful

"WILLIAM."

Thus ran poor William's letter. Oh, what mischief had my idle vanity wrought! What would I not have given to have blotted out the record of one thoughtless hour! The angel of consideration had whipped the offending spirit of coquetry from her bosom. The memory of his early love and devotion—his integrity and truth—came back upon her with the fragrance and freshness of the opening spring. Then the thought of the cold, dark waters to which she had driven him—of his finding there an untimely grave—and his injured ghost coming and standing beside her bed at the midnight hour, and crying—"Oh, cruel Lucy!" I read all this in her woe-begone face; and penetrated with remorse, I took her hand, and said with a manly feeling, which I think did me honour—"Lucy, I am sorry for you from the bottom of my heart. I am alone to blame. Your William will come back again—I am sure he will—and if he

does not—by Heaven! I will marry you myself! Yes, I am going a long journey—perhaps I, too, must cross the ocean; but I shall return in two years, if my life is spared; and then, if you are willing, my pretty Lucy, I'll marry you, and cherish you tenderly as long as I live."

"You are very, very kind," sobbed Lucy, "and I like you very much—but I'd rather have William, after all."

Oh, simple and unadulterated nature! how eloquent thou art! Art never taught its polished votaries a sentence more beautifully impressive, than this spontaneous expression of truth and sensibility!

Let us suppose two years and a little more are passed—that spring has covered the hill-side with green, and the valley with bloom. It was this sweet season when I again stopped at the village where I had spent the memorable Thanksgiving day. It was Sunday. Every thing was perfectly still: even my bustling little landlady had gone to meeting without asking a single question. I brushed the dust from my garments, and took the path to the white church, that now contrasted beautifully with the velvet common on which it was built. I entered: again I heard those deep, adoring accents which had once before thrilled through my very soul: again I looked on the benign countenance of the servant of God, still bearing the sacred impress of his celestial embassy. I looked round. My eyes rested upon a pew not far from the pulpit, and they wandered no more. I felt as if a mountain were removed from my heart. Lucy was

there, more beautiful than ever: her fair brow turned thoughtfully upwards, and a sweet, subdued expression diffused over her whole sunny face; and William was by her side, in the dignity of manhood, and, no longer under the dominion of a withering passion, looked not unworthy of his blooming bride. As soon as the service was over, I stood in the broad aisle, waiting for them to pass out. My heart throbbed quicker as they approached with that sober, decent pace, which becomes those who are leaving the temple of the Most High. At length she raised her downcast eye, and it fell upon my face: a glow like the morning overspread her own.

"Oh! sir," said she, after the first heartfelt greeting was over, "I am so happy now! William has come back, you see, and"—"And you are married," added I, taking up her hesitating speech. William blushed, and turned upon her a look of such pride and affection, I almost envied him. I have had many a joyous hour, but never have I felt so exquisitely happy as in the conviction that moment brought me, that the honest, loving hearts my folly had severed, were again united in those holy bands, which God having formed, were never more to be lightly sundered.

## The Stranger at the Banquet.

"TWAS a festal eve. The lamps sent down their trembling rays, reflected by shining crystal, and wreathing silver, on myriad forms of beauty and grace. The music sent forth the most gladdening strains, and bounding feet kept time to the joyous melody. Evening shades deepened into midnight gloom without, yet still the gay notes were heard, and the unwearied revellers continued their graceful evolutions.

Just as the clock struck twelve, a stranger entered the banqueting room, and as she passed slowly on unannounced, and unaccompanied by any guide or protector, every eye was turned towards her. "Who can she be?" whispered a young girl to her partner, drawing close to his side.

He answered not, so intently was he gazing on the figure, which now stood in the centre of the hall, looking calmly and immoveably on those around. Her white robes fell in long, slumberous folds to her feet; her fair shining hair floated back from her face, like fleecy clouds, tinged by the moonbeam's radiance, and the still depths of her azure eyes shone with a mysterious, unfathomable lustre.

"Why are ye gathered here?" asked she of the young maiden, who shrunk back, as she glided near her, with noiseless step. "What mean these glad strains, and the flowers that decorate your brows?"

The low, thrilling melody of the stranger's voice echoed to the remotest corners of that spacious hall, and the minstrels paused to listen.

"'Tis a festal eve," answered the trembling maiden, "and we have met in joy and mirth, to commemorate the era."

"Why is this night chosen as a scene of festivity?" asked the sweet-voiced stranger.

"It is Christmas eve," replied the maiden, "the birth-night of our Saviour, and it is our custom to celebrate it with music and dancing."

"It was once celebrated in ancient days," said the stranger, "with a splendour and beauty that would shame the decorations of these walls. While the shepherds of Chaldea were watching their flocks beneath the starry glories of midnight, they heard strains of more than mortal melody gushing around them—rolling above them—the thrilling of invisible harps, accompanied by celestial voices, all breathing one sweet, triumphant anthem—'Glory to God in the Highest; on Earth peace, and good will to men.' While they listened in adoring wonder, one of the stars of Heaven glided from its throne, and travelling slowly over the depths of ether, held its silver lamps over the manger, where slept the babe of Bethlehem. Then the wise men of the East came with their costly offerings, and laid them down at the feet of the infant Redeemer. And where are your gifts?" continued she, turning her still, shining eyes from one to the other of the listening throng. "What have ye brought this night to lay at your Saviour's feet

in commemoration of your gratitude and love? Where is your gold, your frankincense, your myrrh? Where are the gems from the heart's treasury, that ye are ready to sacrifice on the altar of your Lord?"

The young maiden whom she had first addressed, cast one tearful, earnest glance on her gay companions; then unbinding the roses from her brow, the jewels from her neck, and drawing from her fingers each golden ring, "Where is the altar," she cried, "that I may place my offerings there?"

"Come with me," said the stranger, "and I will lead you where you can find more precious gifts than these. Gifts that will retain their beauty, when these garlands shall wither, and the diamond and fine gold become dim."

The maiden took hold of the stranger's hand, and passed through the hall, which she had so lately entered in thoughtless vanity and mirth. Her companions pressed round her and impeded her way. "Oh, stay with us!" they exclaimed, "and follow not the steps of the stranger: your eyes are dim, your cheek is pale, shadows are gathering over your face. She may lead you to the chambers of death."

"Hinder me not," cried the fair maiden; "I may not slight the voice that summons me. 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.'"

A celestial smile beamed on the face of the stranger as the young girl uttered these words, and they disappeared from the festive hall. Through the long sweeping shadows of midnight they glided on, till

they came to a wretched hovel, through whose shattered casements the night gust was moaning, making most melancholy music. By the dim light of a taper, they beheld a pale mother, cradling her wasted infant in her arms, striving to hush its feeble wailings, looking down with hollow eyes on the fearful ravages of famine and disease, then raising them in agony to Heaven, imploring the widow's and the orphan's God to have mercy on her.

"Lay down your golden offerings here," said the stranger, "and your Saviour will accept the gift. Have ye not read that whosoever presenteth a cup of cold water to one of the least of his disciples, in his name, giveth it unto him?"

The maiden wept, as she laid her offering in the widow's emaciated hand. Again the beauteous stranger smiled. "The tear of pity," said she, "is the brightest gem thou hast brought."

She led her forth into the darkness once more, and held such sweet and heavenly discourse that the heart of the maiden melted within her bosom. They came to a dwelling whence strains of solemn music issued, and as the light streamed from the arching windows, it was reflected with ghostly lustre on marble tomb-stones gleaming without.

"They breathe forth a requiem for the dead," said the stranger, and she entered the gate through willows that wept over the path. The music ceased, and the low, deep voice of prayer ascended through the silence of the night. The maiden knelt on the threshold, for she felt that she was not worthy to

enter into the temple. She hardly dared to lift her trembling eyes to Heaven; but bending her forehead to the dust and clasping her hands on her breast, she exclaimed, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

"Thy Saviour will accept the offering," uttered the stranger in her ear; "the prayer of a broken and contrite spirit, is an incense more precious to Him than all the odours of the East."

"You shall see me again," said the stranger, when she led the young maiden to her own home, by the light of the dawning day; "you shall see me again, and we will walk together once more, but not among scenes of sorrow and death, for they shall all have fled away. Neither will we walk through the shades of midnight, for 'there will be no night there.' There will be no moon, nor stars to illumine the place, 'for the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb be the light thereof.' Farewell—I may tarry with you, but ye shall come and abide with me, if ye continue to walk in the path where I have directed your steps."

Never more were the steps of the young maiden seen in the halls of mirth, or the paths of sin. She went about among the children of sorrow and want, binding up the wounds of sorrow and relieving the pangs of want. She hung over the death-bed of the penitent, and breathed words of life into the dull ear of despair. Men looked upon her as she passed along, in her youthful beauty, as an angel-spirit, and they blessed her in her wanderings. Her true companions turned aside, shrinking from communion with one

whose eyes now spoke a holier language than that of earth. They felt that she was no longer one of them, and after wondering and speaking of her a little while, she was forgotten by them in the revelries of pleasure.

At length she was no longer seen by those who watched for her daily ministrations. Her place was vacant in the temple of God. The music of her voice was no more heard in prayer and praise. On a lowly couch in her own darkened room, that young maiden was reclining. Her face was pallid, and her eyes dim, and her mother was weeping over her. Flowers were strewn upon her pillow, whose sweet breath stole lovingly over her faded cheek; and as the curtains of the windows waved softly in the night breeze, the moonbeams glided in and kissed her wan brow. The mother heard no step, but she felt the air part near the couch, and looking up she saw a figure standing in white flowing robes by her daughter's side, with a face of such unearthly sweetness, she trembled as she gazed upon her.

"Maiden," said she, "I have come once more. I told thee we should meet again, and this is the appointed hour. Does thy spirit welcome my coming?"

"My soul has thirsted for thee," answered the faint voice of the maiden, "even as the blossom thirsts for the dew of the morning; but I may not follow thee now, for my feeble feet bear me no longer over the threshold of home."

"Thy feet shall be as the young roe on the mountain," answered the white-robed stranger; "thou shalt

mount on wings as the eagle." Then bending over the couch, and breathing on the cheek of the maiden, its pale hue changed to the whiteness of marble, and the hand which her mother held, turned cold as an icicle. At the same moment the folds of the stranger's robe floated from her shoulders, and wings of resplendent azure softening into gold, fluttered on the gaze. Divine perfumes filled the atmosphere, and a low, sweet melody, like the silvery murmuring of distant waters, echoed through the chamber. Awe-struck and bewildered, the mother turned from the breathless form of her child, to the celestial figure of the stranger, when she saw it gradually fading from her sight, and encircled in its arms there seemed another being of shadowy brightness, with outspread wings and fleecy robes, and soft, glorious eyes fixed steadfastly on her, till they melted away and were seen no more. Then the mother bowed herself in adoration, as well as submission; for she knew she had looked on one of those angel messengers who are "sent to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation." She had seen, too, a vision of her daughter's ascending spirit, and she mourned not over the dust she had left behind.

THE END.

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