

THE MILLINER

AND

THE MILLIONAIRE.

BY

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OF VIRGINIA,

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PREFACE.

THE innocent perpetrator of "The Lady-Killer," and a great deal of other trash, of which she is heartily ashamed, comes again with another little book, which she begs, respectfully, to dedicate to the Critics of her country. Having rather severely tested their chivalry, magnanimity, and gallantry, she feels that she owes them something, and would fain make the "amende honorable" in her humble way.

Again unguarded, and she fears, defenceless, she walks into their bristling ranks, and offers them her little book. Will they rend it in pieces? will they cuff it, and kick it about? or will they emulate a noble elephant, about which the authoress begs leave, respectfully, to tell them?

This magnificent animal, whose deed has been handed down to history, having escaped from his keepers, was tearing down the street at a furious rate, scattering everything before him, and spreading consternation wherever he went. Rushing on, at this mad rate, what should he encounter but a little child, which had accidentally stumbled, and fallen in his path. The sagacious creature paused—

most noble Critics—and doubtless reflected, in an elephantine way (which the authoress thinks must be a very good way of thinking); then taking the little straggler tenderly and carefully on his proboscis, he stood him up firmly on his little legs again, and dashed on, amid the plaudits and loud huzzas of the admiring multitudes! Perhaps the authoress had better not say any more; but she cannot help wishing that she knew how to please their terrible mightinesses, the Critics, as well as they evidently know how to please her.

So, with her hand upon the region once occupied by her heart, while her heart is in her mouth, she gives her little book up to them.

Laurenceville, Va., March, 1852.

THE MILLINER AND THE MILLIONAIRE.

CHAPTER I.

THE MILLINERY.

“Oh, hidden in some lowly, modest nook,
Dwells my young Ideal,—and I haste me,
Nor longer dally I, where she is not.”

THE WANDERING MUSE.

IN the early spring of that most blessed and bountiful year, 18—, I became sick and weary of my little band of music-scholars. Strange it was, that I, a humble maiden music-mistress, should dream of a pleasure tour; but such a thought actually entered my head. After having thrummed through nearly twenty years of my life, I determined no longer to count my Time—or to divide him by minim and crotchets—or to force him into given rules—or, indeed, to regulate his movements at all, but to let him pursue his own course, while I listlessly yielded to his gentle, undulating current.

On a magnificent starlit night, while worlds above me ran their solemn rounds, and the depthless concave glittered and shone with innumerable lights, I, lonely and unprotected, stepped from the rail-car.

"I am happy to see you at last, Miss Nancy;—how are you, my dear friend?" said young Roland Stuart, who awaited me at the Centreville Depot.

"Very well, thank you. Why, Stuart, how well you are looking!" said I, returning his cordial grasp, and pointing out my favourite box to his man, which, to my dismay, I recognised on the shoulder of a huge fellow, and on its way to the next train.

"Now," said I, having seen my box triumphantly rescued, "pray how is your mamma?"

"Mamma!" cried the young man, with intense emotion, "alas! Miss Nancy, she is dead!"

I staggered, so sudden was the shock. Dead! my old school-mate, my best friend, whom in my freedom I so quickly sought! I bowed my head and wept; for I felt the strong ties of earth being loosed around me, as, one by one, the few I loved laid them down to rest. I turned to my young friend, and whispered of Heaven and of eternity; for I had no other consolation than these. He pressed my hand, and thanked me; and we walked silently on. We were now upon a sombre shaded street, where but few lights shone to welcome the stranger to Centreville. Before a modest cottage, my conductor paused, and said,

"I am about to introduce you to some humble, but most excellent people. They are my best friends now."

He brushed away a tear from his dark, intelligent eye, and led me in. I was greeted with great warmth by a tall, handsome, and most imposing lady, to whom I was presented as Mrs. Bloom. Stuart then turned, proudly, to a pure, majestic creature, and calling her Rosa, led her to me. With a *naïveté*, so beautiful in the young and lovely, she laid her hand in mine, and bending over, kissed me, and welcomed me to her home. Mrs. Bloom carefully unshawled me, placed me in a large, comfortable chair, and by a thousand graceful and unobtrusive attentions, bade me welcome. Easy and familiar, this matron was, evidently, a lady of no humble pretensions. She had an air and a grace far above the lowly cottage in which I found her.

"Surely," thought I, "these are most handsome and charming ladies."

Stuart set apart; his fine face beaming with delight, as his eye followed the gentle Rosa, who performed with such earnest simplicity the beautiful rites of hospitality. Happy thoughts dimpled around his expressive mouth, and his fine eye shone with a deeper and intenser glow. Sitting in my arm-chair, sipping my tea luxuriously, I wove, in my ever busy brain, a fair romance. Pleasantly the low voices of the pleasant ladies fell humming on my ear. How beautiful is kindness—and how delicious is well-made tea

—and how heavenly is young love, when it comes nestling into untutored hearts!

The fair night rolled easily and delightfully on; and the gentle Rosa led me away into a neat and airy chamber, where pillows white as snow, and fragrant sheets, invited me to rest. Again the sweet girl kissed me, and wished me a pleasant night in my charming room; and then she left me, lost in admiration at all her gentle skill, in winning, soothing, pleasing, and endearing. There was a something in her manner—a heart-touching something—which drew the heart to her like a magnet. Being very much fatigued, I sank into a deep, unbroken sleep; and the morning found me strengthened and refreshed.

Before breakfast, the door-bell rang violently. Some ladies came in, and to my unbounded surprise, I found myself in a regular millinery establishment, whose chief was my queen-like hostess, and whose principal ornament was her uncommonly attractive daughter. But I magnanimously betrayed no uneasiness at this unexpected denouement. I make it a point ever to yield, with becoming deference, to the blessed idiosyncrasies of our glorious democracy; and, throwing aside that precious particle of the aristocrat, which, in these realms appertains to an amateur music-teacher, I sauntered into the saloon. Here Mrs. Bloom presided in state. She nodded approvingly to me, as I entered her domain, and I proceeded to praise her bonnets and caps in no measured terms. A little

peaked lady was haggling over a spring hat; and not one of Mrs. Bloom's Paris or Leghorns came up to that fastidious lady's ideal of a becoming bonnet. I adroitly settled the mooted point, by placing a blue drawn silk upon Rosa's arched head, and threw the little peaked lady into ecstasies. That was the bonnet for her precious money. She quickly handed Mrs. Bloom six dollars, and seized the prize. Now some country customers came in. For several hours Mrs. Bloom was engaged with these ladies, who hung upon her words, and looked up with mighty deference and awe to the supreme arbitress of fashion. Mrs. Bloom was a truly great woman, not to say a money-making one. She flattered, pleased, and cajoled, with inimitable grace; and swept the filthy lucre into her drawer like so much trash, which was not to be named in the same day with the beautiful high-born dames who thronged her saloon. Truly a millinery is a pleasant place, when pleasant people dwell therein—and custom comes, and bonnets go.

This fancy establishment of Mrs. Washington Bloom's was quite a showy affair, and was, evidently, a most fashionable resort. Indeed, so very high did our clever manageress stand with the "upper ten," that they did not scruple to recognise her on street. This bit of condescension on the part of a clique of Virginia highflyers, was a matter of no little astonishment to me. But, as I have said before, Mrs. Bloom's talents were remarkable, and her

sway absolute. Mind, manner, tact, and a fine person, have their influence everywhere; and this lady possessed all these in an eminent degree. Standing midway between the parvenus and the genuine article, she controlled both. I cannot sufficiently commend this lady's energy, nor can I now acquaint the reader with all the sleight-of-hand tricks and masterly manoeuvres employed by her, to attain her present exalted and enviable station. Suffice it to say, she was regal behind her counter, patronising and gracious to the grandees of the land, and entertaining and irresistible whenever, for her own purpose, she chose to be so.

This fancy millinery was within a short walk of the woods and water brooks of the country; and after the busy bustling day was over, we generally roamed at large. Mrs. Bloom and I, arm-in-arm, might be seen daintily picking our steps through the deep echoing wood. Stuart and Rosa would follow us, loitering in the balmy eves, over cherished spots, and stealing along the long-drawn wooded aisles, like happy spirits as they were. Not so, the widow and I. We walked briskly on for healthy exercise. Like two philosophers, we discoursed boldly on heaven and earth. Sometimes we dabbled into politics, often squabbled about church government, and plunged, with a zest, into the last new fashions. Having been accustomed—she in her sewing-room, and I in my music-room—to have our own way, we sometimes let “our angry passions rise,” and were not very choice in the epithets we bandied. One

evening, after thrusting sarcasms for nearly an hour, and finding my fair antagonist getting the upper hand, both in voice and argument, I endeavoured to stem the current by inquiring how my young friend Stuart was getting on since his mother's death.

“Very well, very well, Miss,” replied the widow briskly. “His mother left him some little property which he allows to accumulate, while his salary of \$500 supplies his immediate wants. I should say he was not making a brilliant fortune, Miss Nancy, but going steadily along, and wisely laying up a little for a future day.”

“The best way after all,” said I; “people must crawl before they can walk, Mrs. Bloom. I had rather go slowly and surely on, than too fast. You remember the tortoise in the fable, my dear Madam, what astonishing progress she made by these means. A moderate competency is preferable to great riches.”

At the latter clause of my wise remarks, the lady tossed her head disdainfully, shook the fringed lappets on her French cap, and proceeded to adjust her ribbon. From these symptoms, it was very evident that she was not of my way of thinking.

“Do you not agree with me, my dear Madam?” I ventured to inquire.

“Well really, I am not a proper judge!” she said, scornfully. “Of the wonderful blessings of a moderate competency, I surely know nothing. Of the two extremes only, can

I speak. I was once very rich, and am now very poor, and *my* experience whispers me, that wealth is a great promoter of happiness. Of course, my opinions are of no weight when compared with yours."

"Do not say so, my dear Madam," I answered quickly "These things depend upon ourselves, our habits, and the manner in which we have been raised. Some require riches, others but little, to insure their happiness; therefore, we find our own moral constitutions deciding this great question without our assistance."

"Exactly, Miss," replied the widow, raising her arched brows, and by a very slight intonation giving me to understand the immense difference between *her* moral constitution and mine. After a little more conversation, the lady informed me that she had once been the happy possessor of a superb estate; the lofty mistress of plantations, and servants, innumerable; that she had fared sumptuously every day, and rioted in every luxury, and extravagance; but, as is often the case with these high revellers, a tremendous crash ensued. Lands, and negroes, and pleasure carriages, and all the magnificent surroundings of this superb and elegant woman, were swept away, as by an avalanche. Behold, the summer days, with their butterflies and gorgeous hues, were faded, and the luxurious pleasure-seeker was left without a vestige of her former splendour. Years and repinings were of no avail; the strong-minded and ambitious woman, turned about and in another sphere, we

and her strong-minded and ambitious still. She who had tasted power, must have power again; and her master spirit still swayed, and still asserted its supremacy, and still brooked no show of condolence and sympathy. But in her proud heart there was bitterness; she chafed beneath the rod. She longed to regain her high eminence; she pined hopelessly in her obscurity. The ice being broken, the *entente cordial* established, and a retrospective view opened, the queen milliner launched out. "You must know, Miss, that I belong to one of the first families in Virginia."

"How!" said I, my own insignificance becoming now truly appalling, "a bona fide F. F. V.! Dear me, Madam!" I ventured, also, to look up into the lady's face, and to hazard a smile at my first attempt at wit in her presence.

"No jokes, if you please, Miss! A subject like this is no matter for idle jests."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Bloom. Not being one of the first families myself, in short, being pretty straightly descended from a respectable leather-breeches-maker, I cannot correctly understand the grandeur and importance of the F—I mean first families. My dear Madam, pray excuse me."

A look of withering scorn fell, like a meteor, from her rolling, black orbs, and, with upraised hands, she exclaimed—

"Miss Nancy Joyner, whoever or whatever you may be—Yankee pedlar or wandering Jew—your *age*, and the

fact which you seem to forget, viz., that you are my guest for the want of a place to go to, shall protect you from any impolite retorts. My blood is too high for *that*, depend upon it."

The widow drew herself up, and no longer talked of her descent, but ascended visibly.

"I meant no offence, upon my word, Mrs. Bloom," said I, drawing near, and endeavouring to soothe her.

"You steer very wide of your intentions then, most remarkable Miss. Pray do not bend my hoop in that unbecoming manner," was the only consolation vouches me by this offended milliner.

She scornfully adjusted her voluminous skirts, edged from me, threw her fine head back, and proceeded to eye me from her unapproachable height, askant and haughtily. Thus rebuked, and I may say annihilated, I twirled my steel bag—the widow sported her more elegant one. Thus we walked, in silence, respectfully apart. Behold what a great fire a little matter kindleth! What an explosion was here! From that day to this, Mrs. Bloom has never ceased to regard me as her sworn enemy; and no effort on my part has ever reinstated me in her good graces. I learned from this that jesting is not always proper, indeed, that some people have not the slightest conception of a joke.

Stuart and Rosa came up laughing, and declared they never heard a dispute more stoutly maintained.

"Eavesdroppers, bah!" cried our angry queen-milliner, turning on her heel, and taking the road homewards. We followed her, and the gay quartette, which had sallied forth for a healthy country ramble, trudged back like a funeral procession.

Mrs. Bloom was the first to reach the precincts sacred to bonnets and their appurtenances. In justice to this lady, I must say that, instead of barring her doors against me as I expected, she overwhelmed me with politeness,—thereby making the remaining posterity of the leather-breeches-maker feel very small,—thereby proclaiming, in an eloquent pantomime of which she was eminently capable, that, although I abused her hospitality, yet the fine old Virginia blood coursing indignantly through her veins was far too refined to admit of the least indecorum towards her humble "guest pro tem.," as she, with marked emphasis, styled me. I was ushered into the ladies' private sitting-room for the first time. Formal, but elaborately polite, the lady gave me the chair of honour. Mrs. Bloom left the room to see about tea, and I ventured to glance around. The sewing-room was above this, where the milliner daily superintended the nimble fingers of a dozen girls, and in whose ranks that majestic lady was wont to spread fear and consternation. Freedom in any shape is a blessed thing; and, in Mrs. Bloom's absence, my eyes roved unchecked, taking, with curious accuracy, an inventory of that lady's private sitting-room. Here were dis-

played all the remains of former grandeur the lady of high descent could boast. Here were the few rich ornaments she had snatched from the wreck, repeating from their distinguished stations the mighty history of the past. An oblong table, curiously inlaid, under which stood a vase of graceful dimensions, said plainly that it had not been always thus alone. An amber-cushioned sofa, elaborate and rich, partially covered with striped linen, looked out now and then, astonishing the natives with its own elegance, and whispering of the great saloon it once, *cum multis alis*, had assisted to grace. A French mirror, of superb dimensions, could scarcely rear its magnificent head beneath Mrs. Bloom's rather low ceiling; but it reflected not only the present, but the great past. Over this uncommonly rich mirror, this costly exotic, this idol of the widow's heart, was drawn a veil of mosquito-netting.

Now this was all of wealth, foiled ingloriously by a dozen straight, cane-bottomed chairs, a stout, penitentiary-woven rug, a black-walnut candle-stand, a flat, brass candle-stick, and a pair of old, ricketty, cross-grained, unaccommodating, silver snuffers. Beside the candle-stand sat Rosa, with the interesting snuffers in hand. She knew their wicked ways, and had often striven against them. In a masterly manner she clutched them, gave them a twitch only to be acquired by long practice, which, to my surprise, threw the antagonistic edges together, and, with a rebellious clitch, snuffed the candle. Brightly rose the

fitful flame, bringing out into relief the magnificent daughter of Mrs. Washington Bloom. There was never, even in Virginia, a more beautiful creation than she. Strictly, classically, transcendently beautiful, not a fault had she physically. She had long, raven hair, wound in shining coils around a bold, imperial head. A rounded, pallid brow, which a phrenologist would have pronounced his ideal of intellectuality, nose petite, but slightly re-troussée, mouth rather large, but more compressed, chin not full, but delicately and chastely cut, cheek smooth, oval, and variable, figure rounded, yielding, and graceful, and about her breast, throat, arms, and finely-modelled hands, meandered that curving line of beauty, on which Hogarth dwelt with such delight. The master-painter could have found it here, undulating mysteriously and describing, better than words, the supreme magic of its power.

"Ah!" thought I, "you have doubtless many admirers, Miss Rosa; and methinks your uncommon beauty is destined to reinstate you in that high region, from which fate so cruelly hurled you."

This young high-born damsel, *malgré* her swan-like throat and sweeping lashes, was at work upon a belated cap. Her white hand stole cautiously amid fluttering gauzes and delicate illusion stuffs—controlling lace and ribbons to her taste—touching up cloudlike chaotic fabrics, and investing them, as if by magic, with a sudden unex-

pected beauty. Soon, I recognised a proper cap emerging from these cloudlike tissues, and assuming, under her skilful hands, a tasty, fashionable form.

Roland Stuart, now joyful, and a little boisterous, came in.

"Come, Rosa, down with that piece of architecture, I would not have you spoil your eyes for all the caps in Christendom."

At the sound of his ever-welcome voice, she smiled and raised her eyes to his, and immediately her whole appearance changed. They brought with them a splendour, a startling brilliancy, a deepening glow, a fathomless soul-revealing lustre, which her white lids, however beautiful, had never fully promised. Her mere physical proportions were unheeded when the fulness of light shone from her eyes.

She smiled on her lover as he bent proudly over her; and what a magnificent tableau was here!

But I can no longer defer most honourable mention of my friend Roland Stuart, as he appeared to my not impartial eyes. He was, my dear reader, no insignificant, namby-pamby hero, to be despatched with a word. Stuart was a man after my own heart. First in manly beauty, and first in every manly attribute. Bold and free, independent, high-spirited, and full of mettle; he disdained all flattery, or deceit, yet he won all hearts by his genuine goodness of heart and genial warmth of manner. He was

a well-informed man of the world; none of your sighing-dying cavaliers, but an honest-hearted citizen, capable of loving sincerely, but like a man. He was also a thorough business man, acting with promptness and decision, and knowing well how to steer his course. Active and industrious, he was as busy as a bee on street, and nobody to have seen him walking briskly hither and thither, would have said, "See, he is a lover!" or, "He weeps over a tale of woe," or "He can sing love-songs by moonlight"—but all this was so, and more. He was a perfect child when his great soul broke forth, and it flashed out sometimes with a glorious light. His conversation was fine, and even delightful. He had ever a merry laugh, and dearly loved a joke. Indeed, my friend Stuart was a little too fond of a joke; particularly when he could annoy over-sensitive ladies. Poor Rosa had a holy horror of jokes; and her lover revelled in her blushes, and turned a deaf ear to all her remonstrances. I have seen him toss his chestnut hair from his open brow, and look out most wickedly, as Rosa, all gravity and decorum, would become more grave and decorous at his alarming sallies. Stuart was a politician, too. Not lukewarm, but an honourable partisan, thinking for himself, and allowing other people to think for themselves, without wrangling and squabbling continually, because all men, of all temperaments under the sun, could not conscientiously hold the same opinions. He had his views upon annexation, non-intervention, the tariff, the

sub-treasury, and all those things, of which I only know the name. But had he been disputatious, had he been a demagogue, had he been an unscrupulous electioneerer, and a long-winded eternally-haranguing whig, or democrat, he would never have been the hero of *my* book, that's all. Never would *my* pen have been wielded, except for his instantaneous extermination, and inglorious expulsion from the borders of creation. Men who sit cross-legged in bar piazzas, with quids of tobacco in their mouths, spittoons under their noses, and politics in their heads, are not the stuff out of which *I* would make a hero. Bah! I ask of what use are they? Whom do they convince? Whom do they control? But my hero was none of these. He was as firm as a rock, a true friend, and an honourable enemy. Never taking undue advantage, but facing an armed phalanx for his rights. Gracious! such a man was well worth a respectable sprinkling of tears and a few smiles to raise his hopes; and surely, was he worthy of all truth, and honour, and devotion, to keep him after being gloriously won!

My fair hostess, Mrs. Bloom, was the first to intrude upon my magnificent tableau and profound reverie.

"Fie! Rosa, not done Miss Grant's cap yet! Here is the girl Dicy waiting for it;" and, from the background, there emerged a dumpling glossy negro lass, armed with a yellow band-box.

"Miss Pocahontas says as how—" commenced dumpling, her eyes shining like bits of phosphorus.

"You can say the cap is not done," interposed Rosa quietly.

"But I was sent for it—Miss Poca—"

"Very well, Dicy, but the cap is not done yet," returned Rosa, very decidedly.

"But Miss Poca—"

"Must wait until to-morrow," said Rosa briskly.

Mrs. Bloom here interposed, and instead of these brusque retorts, charged dumpling with an oily message, running thus—

"Just say to Miss Grant, Dicy, that, from an unusual press of business, Miss Bloom failed to comply with her promise. She will take the cap to her by eight o'clock in the morning."

The girl departed, leaving her band-box as a kind of hostage in Mrs. Bloom's hands. Rosa resumed her work, and Stuart looked sadly on.

"The pale flicker of this one candle is barely sufficient for me to grope my way with," said the girl. A tear almost stood in her eye, but she bravely stifled it, and looking up at her saddened lover, tried to smile.

A milliner's life is a sorry one, even when the poor seamstress is born and bred to her station; but imagine the rich, impetuous blood of a Virginia grandee descending and creeping painfully through the overtasked frame of a plodding seamstress! Imagine the light of other days hovering over her, and making the darkness more visible.

Imagine Rosa Bloom, queenly, high-born, and gloriously beautiful—in opening womanhood—ignominiously tied to her needle, and toiling painfully for her daily bread!

And to Rosa, this was the least of all evils. She was reduced to other extremities by her mother, whose ambition, like a pampered giant, strode over all tenderness and compassion. Rosa, in her beauty, could have toiled on cheerfully, in the quaint old cottage; could have trilled out her light airs, and stitched away gaily all the day, but the mother, with her appalling ambition, marred the comforts of the present, and pointed out to her a future, from which the fair young creature shrank dismayed. No wonder, then, that the oval cheek paled, and the sparkling eye drooped unquietly. There was sorrow coiled deep in her young, pure heart—there was something there, blighting her budding youth—chasing the smiles so wont to wreath her lips—stealing the rose-hues from her cheeks, and tinging her very happiness. This it was which gave that touching sadness to her manner—this it was which appealed to every heart—this it was which drew me to her—this it was which made the lover linger near her, ever cheerful, ever jocular, ever striving to call up the smiles so rare, and yet so beautiful.

But the cap is finished. Stuart begs Rosa to waltz with him, and while they whirl about, I thrum away pertinaciously upon my guitar. We sought the cool air on the piazza, and Rosa asked the loan of my instrument.

“I have not seen one since——” she said, brushing away a tear, and hugging the instrument as she would an old friend who whispered of better days. A few swelling chords stole from her pearly fingers, and wandered out, mellow and gushing, on the night-breeze. Roland leaned back and drank in the sad, prolonged notes. Rosa raised her eyes, and the moon arose. The silver light kissed her pale cheek, and was quenched by her gleaming eye. As clear as the bulbul she sang—

Beautiful night!

Unclouded, serene,

In silver light,

Rises the star-queen.

Beautiful night, so tranquilly beaming,

Deep in my heart, sadly erring, yet blest;

Cool is thy breath and soft is thy gleaming,

And sweet are thy murmurs, telling of rest.

Beautiful night!

Starlit, unbroken;

Depthless in light,

Eternity token.

Beautiful night! no shadows are sleeping,

High in thy chambers, star-lighted above

Soft-wingéd angels vigils are keeping,

Watching with eyes full of pity and love.

The low, gushing melody arose, and swelled again, and the night, in its majesty, listened.

“Rosa,” cried Stuart, “oh! sing again.”

"I cannot," said the girl; "my songs bring back all I would fain forget. 'Tis painful to sing when every note brings forth a tear. Besides, Mamma does not like me to sing, particularly with the guitar."

"Ah, but one more song," urged Stuart.

"I am too sad to sing. I should not recall the past, but endeavour to forget it. This guitar brings back my home in the pleasant summer eves, when I was a very little girl—but sang, even then, these old simple songs."

The humble bonnet-maker had aroused my sympathies. Her touching song, and vibrating tones, had penetrated into my heart. I drew near her, my arm encircled her waist, and I fain would have dived into the innermost depths of her sorrow. Quickly she changed. Her pride awoke. No stranger should intermeddle with her grief, or descend into the sanctum of her proud, troubled heart. Its wrongs and its struggles should never ripple the surface of the deep, still water. With an effort, she stilled the rising billows, and turning to me gently, said,—

"We have all our sorrows, Miss Nancy,—young people particularly. They have their imaginary sorrows, until the stern true trouble comes, which, when stoutly met, oft proves the lesser evil of the two."

"Very well said, my dear," replied I. "Happy those built up of good old mother earth, whose imaginary troubles never come. They laugh and grow fat, and rear children and grandchildren, and, having finished their parts, they

drop, like ripe fruit, into the broad bosom which nourished them,—while she with the soul, often pines, and the impatient spirit beats restlessly against its earthly prison bar, and, beckoned by immortality without, still strives and beats, until the weary prisoner is released. The silver cord is loosed, the spirit free to roam afar, and the weary strife is over."

Silence reigned supreme; incense rose from earth to heaven. Rosa's lips moved; she, too, sent up incense to heaven. A whippoorwill commenced his nightly wail. The stars glistened beside the pale wan moon. Stuart took the hand of his promised bride, and we withdrew into the house. In the half rich, half poor parlour, we found Mrs. Bloom busy with the threaded steel. She scarcely noticed us, so absorbed was she with her work, or with her thoughts. She handed Rosa a piece of work, and Stuart abruptly bade us good evening. I followed him, and taking his arm, said, I would walk to the end of the square, as I had a few minutes' conversation with him. We sallied forth, and I commenced,—

"I was thinking, my dear Roland, that perhaps my visit to these good people has been long enough."

"No notification from head-quarters to that effect, I hope?" he replied, laughing.

"Not exactly," said I dubiously, recalling Mrs. Bloom's elaborate attentions to her guest pro tem.; "but if I leave here I hardly know where to turn my steps."

"Could you not enter into some arrangement with Mrs. Bloom?"

"That is a question I really cannot pretend to solve. You best understand the eccentricities peculiar to that wonderful lady. I am very much afraid she would demolish me with a look, if I were to propose boarding with her until October."

"Afraid of Mrs. Bloom already, Miss Nancy! Ha! ha! ha! And you such a stout, compact little body, too! Why not propose to give Rosa music-lessons, and pay your board in that way?"

"But Rosa already excels me."

"In genius, not in science," replied the lover.

I smiled at this poor compliment to myself. After much debate on the subject, it was resolved that as I dared not beard the lioness in her den, Stuart would broach the subject for me, and with the aid of his superior knowledge and address, endeavour to gain the signal favour for me, of boarding with Mrs. Bloom, and giving her daughter music-lessons.

"Now, tell me of your own affairs," said I, turning from Mrs. Bloom's gate, to walk down the quiet street again. "You are engaged to a lovely girl,—you are prosperous and happy,—your plans and hopes must indeed resemble a fairy tale."

"Not at all," he replied; "I am the most unfairy-like and matter-of-fact man in the world, except when I am with

Rosa, and then, romance, and sentiment, and verse, and song, come whirling down upon me like an avalanche. She is so heaven-born, so pure, so ethereally holy, and *spirituelle*, that I am scarcely myself, when, sitting in moonbeams, I listen to her songs."

"Exactly," replied I; "still, notwithstanding all this, I suppose you are making preparations for your married life?"

"I am prepared, thank God, to make Rosa far more comfortable than she is now, poor girl."

"She seems to be harshly used by her mother," said I.

"Her young spirit is broken, and in chains. Oh! what a blessed day that will be to me, when I see her released from this durance vile, a happy, indulged, contented, smiling, beautiful, gentle, adorable wife!"

"Very happy indeed!" said I looking up at the moon, as she peeped out from a floating, veil-like cloud.

Stuart informed me, during our promenade, that he was superintendent for Mr. Josiah Hepburn, the rich man of Centreville. "You should see Mr. Hepburn, Miss Nancy; you would see a plain, unostentatious, industrious gentleman, whose wealth is estimated at three millions, or thereabouts."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed, thinking what an enormous number of music-scholars it would take, to make up such a sum.

"Do you see that grove of aspens?" said Stuart, pointing; "just to the right, you see his house."

I saw a low, Black-Dutch-built affair, silent and gloomy.

"He would not exchange that grim mansion for Grantland. He owns nearly one-third of Centreville. The street we walk in, the cottage ornée of the peerless Mrs. Bloom; and that fair dame lives like a princess, compared to Mr. Hepburn."

"Do give me the history of this singular man," said I.

"He is," said Stuart, "a mournful instance of the insufficiency of mere gold to bring happiness to the human heart."

"For," said I, "happiness is altogether constitutional. Show me a sound stomach, and you show me a happy man."

"My dear Miss Nancy!" cried the lover.

"Isn't this Mr. Hepburn dyspeptic?" I asked energetically, mounting my hobby, and getting ready for a long gallop.

"No, upon my word his digestion is unexceptionable; but as I was about to say—"

"Was he ever too full and plethoric?"

"No, my dear friend, but he was a long, lean, lank, Scotch pedlar."

"Bilious! I vow the man was bilious!"

"No, he was, and is now, a man of nervous temperament, spasmodically mercurial, restless, active, energetic, roaming the country with his pack upon his back."

"Go on, sir," said I savagely, "go on, but I do not intend to give my theory up, if he were a tight-rope dancer."

"You are approaching the truth there; he was an excessively nimble man, more from the force of circumstances, I should judge, than from any constitutional predisposition. I have heard him relate his exploits in one proud, aristocratic, pedlar-hating state. How fine gentlemen would set their dogs upon him, and force him to resort to the tree-tops, in double-quick time; which proves, you know, that pedlars had better not be plethoric and full; therefore, my dear Miss Nancy, peddling must be constitutional."

"Exactly! Persons should adapt their professions to their constitutions; and physicians, instead of fathers and guardians, should always be consulted, before a young man chooses his profession. But about your friend, Mr. Hepburn?"

"My friend, Mr. Hepburn, having been admirably adapted to his profession in a physical point of view, was kicked and cuffed about, from the mountains to the valleys, for about twenty years, at the end of which time he had accumulated an enormous estate; still, he trudged on a few years longer, to make assurance doubly sure, and now, in the great valley of the Mississippi, and still further west, he has luxurious lands, bringing thousands upon thousands of dollars, yearly, into the coffers of this lonely old man; and, Miss Nancy, he is not as happy, upon my word, as his superintendent, now walking with you upon his arm."

"Still," said I, "his money does not make him unhappy, that being a trouble rather easily got rid of."

"No; I only mean to say, that wealth is not happiness. That Mr. Hepburn's heart, lacerated by the cruel ingratitude of his only son, recoils from his gold with disgust."

"He has a son, then?"

"Yes, a miserable, degraded wretch, his only tie on earth; a son, who raised his hand against his too indulgent father, called him a beggarly miser, and with a loud oath, felled him to the ground. This he did in the presence of the whole town, and then he left the state; but his stricken father knows his whereabouts, knows his miserable haunts, knows his penury and want, knows his profligacy and brutality, knows his wickedness and crimes, and, in the dark, still hours, the strong old man wrestles with his grief like a giant. There are traces on his sunken cheek of sorrow fiercely met, and in the clear, cold eye, there is now and then an unsteady flicker, showing the trouble lying deep."

"And is there no hope of the son's reform?"

"None that I can see. He writes to me occasionally, begging money most abjectly, poor fellow! I once handed Mr. Hepburn one of these letters. He spat upon it, tore it into atoms, and turning fiercely upon me, bade me beware how I tampered with the man whose only son has cursed him like a fiend."

"Terrible!" said I.

"Well, you may think me officious, and may say I am not altogether disinterested, but on one thing I am resolved, and that is, to reclaim Mr. Hepburn's prodigal son. I shall

undertake this task, for many reasons. For Mr. Hepburn's kindness to my poor mother, for his kindness to me, for the young man's sake, and to insure some little peace of mind to my benefactor. Every year I faithfully divide my salary with him, and—"

"Why, Stuart!" cried I, "methinks you are not so wise in your generation, after all!"

"I do not pretend to great wisdom. I have only a small germ of philanthropy, which must expand."

After a little more conversation, we parted at Mrs. Bloom's gate. I returned to the private sitting-room. Here I found Rosa sitting with downy eyes over her task. The queen milliner seemed to be in a pucker, and from appearances, I judged she had been lecturing her daughter.

Suddenly, I determined to disclose my boarding designs. I knew the moment was *mal-à-propos*; but a spirit of malicious daring possessed me. I cleared my throat with a preparatory "hem."

"Mrs. Bloom, it affords me great pleasure to say that my health has wonderfully improved since I have been an inmate of your delightful cottage."

"Ahem! Those must be very fine thoughts for one so reduced!" said the widow, making a malicious and sarcastic pun.

I courageously passed on.

"The high situation, the clear, tingling, balmy air, the

crystal spring-water, the combined attractions of town and country, have wrought a great change in me."

"Very great!" responded the lady quickly, giving me to understand it was not for the better, in her eye.

"And I purpose remaining with you, until October, if it meet with your approbation," said I, desperately.

A long silence ensued, after which, the chief bonnet-maker bridled back her high head with a jerk, and said,

"Of course, Miss Joyner, my guests always have my consent to stay with me as long as they think it agreeable and proper."

All this was marked, and delivered with chilling, studious politeness.

"Do stay!" cried Rosa, raising her true friendly eyes to mine.

"I shall remain, if Mrs. Bloom will allow me to propose my own terms."

"Certainly, Miss," said the queen, almost snappishly.

"Very well; I shall undertake to instruct Rosa in music, both on the piano and guitar, and French also, if she desire it. This will enable her to make a support, without spoiling her fine eyes at night."

At this, the widow fairly boiled over. My audacity was not to be endured.

"I suppose," she cried out, stamping her foot, and turning fiercely around, "I suppose that you, Miss, with your usual sagacity and discrimination, are looking forward to

many long years, during which *my* daughter—my daughter *there*—" And with a proud, sweeping gesture, she pointed to the brilliant beauty plying her threaded steel. "Mark her well, Miss! Look, and tell me, how long do you think *she* will be obliged to toil thus?"

"Well, really, Madam—pray excuse me—but I thought your daughter's future was pretty clearly defined."

"Yes, very clearly," said the lady with scorn; "you would insinuate that she is engaged to Mr. Hepburn's poor agent, and will need your paltry accomplishments. You would say that *she* will go trudging about with guitar-cases, and Ollendorf's grammars. Very fine sentiments these. Excessively shrewd, emanating from a brain equally shrewd and fine. One might almost predict such marvellously fine deductions, from one of Miss Joyner's long experience and well-known sagacity. Very well, Miss; go on in this happy way. Sketch out my daughter's future, quite as straight and tame as you are wont to exhibit in those remarkable productions, which you call your landscape drawings. Miss, let it be all flatness, and monotony, and Indian ink, I beg of you, Miss; no long perspective views, no glowing vistas, no bold, sublime, sun-gloried peaks. Murder *her* future as you have ruthlessly murdered nature, Miss, in your innocent pastime. In the mean time, bestow all pains upon her. Teach her as you would a princess. Teach her French, teach her Italian; teach her to play like Strakosch, and sing like Jenny Lind. She may figure

in an ambassador's suite, or, she may rival her great instructress, and preside in awful state over an old field school!"

Having wound up her tremendous climax, and clipped me into mince-meat, the lady resumed her work. I retired in the course of an hour. Undisturbed by Mrs. Bloom's thundering eloquence, a highly flattering opinion of myself, I sank into a quiet slumber, peaceful and tranquil as the star-gemmed heaven, which canopied the humble and the proud.

CHAPTER II.

G R A N T L A N D.

"And lo! they ran after Happiness. With breathless speed they race, and grasp her, as they think. Some in fleeting honours. Some in gold. And then they build for themselves palaces of marble, and rare devices, that they may secure her therein. But she mocks the gilded cage, and flying far away, is free and untrammelled, as a peasant on a holiday."—OLD BOOK.

THE lark arose, high poised in air, and gladdened the heavens and the earth with his wholesome morning song. The king of day, gorgeous in purple and gold, ascended his azure throne. The humble narrator of the Milliner and the Millionaire also arose, and having finished her not very *recherché* toilette, looked out upon Mrs. Bloom's back yard. Here cook was flaunting about in the slanting sunbeams, her black face shining like ebony. Having plenty of time on her hands, and feeling fresh and like doing business in a proper manner, she called up her waiting imp and gave him a switching preparatory to the duties of the day. This boy, who was the terror and pest of the whole neighbourhood, received his morning dressing

in a unique, if not graceful manner; and managed, during the performance, so to fatigue Mrs. Cook, and so, by his excessive activity, to hinder the free use of her arms, that I may say he came off the best of the two. She being rather obese, as is the custom with cooks, and he rather of an eel make, seemingly admirably adapted to slipping out of all difficulties, caused her to puff and blow, and to wipe the perspiration from her sable brow, merely by his scientific evolutions while being held firmly by the collar.

Over, and often, had Mrs. Bloom's cook been heard to remark, that that boy, Shackleford, would be the death of her. He had some remarkable traits, that boy. Excuses were ever on the tip of his tongue, mischief and deviltry (to use cook's own words) for ever in his head. Nobody could ever hope to live out their threescore and ten, who undertook to manage that boy.

I descended into the parlour, leaving cook and her underling at loggerheads. Mrs. Bloom had already breakfasted, and was at work. Rosa was tying on her bonnet, before going to Miss Grant's. Being anxious to see these famous Grants, I asked permission to walk with her. She gladly consented, and after I had drunk my milk and eaten my toast, we took up the yellow band-box, and off we started.

Grantland, the residence of the aristocrats of Centre-ville, was nearly a mile from the suburban residence of Mrs. Bloom. After walking on briskly for nearly half an

hour, we came to a gigantic enclosure, made doubly strong and beautiful, and stretching away for miles around the Grant demesne. A huge gate, carved curiously, glided slowly on its massive hinges, and our humble feet were upon the broad fair lands of the millionaire. Now we had a most imposing view of this Virginian palace, and its attendant houses gathered in groups around. I was lost in admiration. Here all was grand, silent, imposing, regal. I looked with awe upon the close unbroken chain of stalwart oaks, the growth of voiceless centuries, which stood drawn up, like gloomy sentinels, on either side of the broad sanded avenue.

"There are some by-walks, for humble pedestrians like us," said Rosa, smiling, and drawing me gently from the shade of the broad, green-crowned oak.

"No—no—no!" I cried, my enthusiasm wide awake; "the brave old oak for me!"

But some pleasure-carriages were dashing down the broad oak-bound avenue; and I followed her into a pleasant pathway, roofed with jasmine-vines and honeysuckles, and morning roses tipped with dew.

"These Grants must be very rich," said I.

"Very," replied my companion. "The magnificent building before us is the residence of Miss Pocahontas. They say Mr. Grant's establishment is still handsomer, at least, so mamma says," and Rosa dropped her waxen lids, and blushed.

"Did you ever see the gentleman?" I inquired, thinking I was on the track of a very fine romance.

"Several times,—a great many times," and again she blushed.

Stuart has a rival, thought I. What a spot of work is here! But I forget, "the course of true love never did," &c., &c.

"Pray is Mr. Grant handsome, fascinating, clever? Do tell me something about him."

"Mr. Grant is a very large, fleshy gentleman," said Rosa, half smiling, "not irresistibly fascinating, I should say. He is called a good man; but is rather singular, I believe."

"Is he a married gentleman?"

"He is a widower. His wife, a very delicate lady, of large property, lived only three weeks after her marriage."

"Is he an elderly man?"

"He is mamma's senior, by some years."

"After that, my dear, we will walk on. I was about to make a hero of this Mr. Grant; but he won't do,—he won't do, I see."

A sudden turn brought us upon the richly decorated inner gate, and then to the high-lifted dwelling-place of the immaculate Miss Pocahontas Grant, the direct descendant of a line of Indian kings, and the possessor of all that talent, or taste, or genius, could desire.

"Can I see Miss Grant?" timidly inquired Rosa, of a

tall, lazy, nonchalant servant, who stood at his post early and late.

"La! no, Miss; I dare not disturb Miss Grant so early."

"I could not wait, I fear," said the girl; "just say Miss Bloom waits, if you please."

The servant hesitated.

"Certainly, certainly," interrupted a large gentleman, who had just descended from his horse with some difficulty, and left him to his groom.

"Go, Jackson," he continued, with the air of one having authority, "say Miss Bloom has called;—may I conduct you, Miss?"

The milliner took precedence of the music-mistress this time. Mr. Grant, for it was he, took Rosa's hand, and politely guided her into a distant room, while I, with my band-box in my hand, was left blundering about in a large octagonal saloon.

"Oh ho, Mr. Grant!" said I to myself, "I smell a rat, Mr. Grant, I do so. We met you in your carriage, I think, and you took your attendant's horse and rode back to see the pretty milliner;—sly Mr. Grant,—cunning old fox!"

But, surely, never had I stumbled upon such a saloon. What delicate tinting! what elaborately composed panels! what a beautiful floor! I looked around me. I saw a splendid statue of Pocahontas, beautiful as a summer Indian's dream. And near his daughter stood Powhatan,

swarthy and bronzed. In another niche stood Washington, and in another Cibber's mournful Melancholy; and, lastly, in an attitude of inimitable grace, I recognised the beautiful Pauline Borghese. I had not half explored this saloon. I could have lingered here all day. But "I see a hand you cannot see." The nonchalant, having drawn on his white gloves, beckons me away.

"This way, if you please, Miss."

I took up the little band-box, in no pleasant humour, and followed him into the distant room. Here Rosa sat, mild and pensive. Mr. Grant was drawn up close beside her, his eye roving over her fine glowing face with delight.

But how shall I describe the Hon. Maximilian Grant? I dare say I had better not attempt so bold a thing. But my reader (if I have one in the world) would never forgive me for omitting so important a personage.

Mr. Maximilian Grant, of Virginia, was a gentleman not easily forgotten. He was not quite six feet high, but his enormous bulk detracted so much from his inches, that he appeared almost short. He had a large plethoric face, brown crisp hair, large gray—or, as our sovereigns would call them, pewter—eyes, with a fine mouth, handsome teeth, and voluminous chin. He had one peculiarity, which was rather uncommon. There was a nervous twitching, or drawing, about the muscles of the mouth and nose, which gave to this great man's phiz a peculiar, and sometimes amusing, character. Indeed, a person not acquainted with

Mr. Grant's high ton, and elevated standing in society, might have thought he was making faces at one continually. Whatever grace, or rare *insouciance*, he may have boasted among his own clique, the "upper ten" was lost to me, for I never saw him otherwise than wofully *distrain*, and sometimes actually beset by *mauvaise honte*. I must confess, so far as my limited observation extends, those requisites to good breeding, self-possession and a certain air *dégagée*, are not so dependent for their growth and perfection upon the purse, as upon the person. We see a handsome, well-formed man not easily embarrassed. Secure in his appearance, no *faux pas* discourages him; while the man *gros, gauche*, and *outré*, though he be a Croesus, is no drawing-room ornament. He is but an elephant in a china-shop, and must ever be on the look-out for a crash. Mr. Grant rocked and waddled, when he would have tripped daintily from chair to chair, and his visage wore a purple hue, notwithstanding his ton. Now, these faults, in the eyes of some ladies, are unpardonable. Some can look beyond the casket—or, in Mr. Grant's case, the cask—to the inner jewels. Unfortunately for the honour of the sex, these ladies are few, and far between. Our millionaire had no sentiment, no fancy, no sprightliness, no repartee, no delicacy, no grace; but was a huge unshapely farragon of all our sex holds unloveable. How must he have appeared to Rosa, that fair impersonation of delicacy! If he looked like an ox to me, how must he have appeared to her, so

fastidiously timid, and shrinking from herself in excess of maidenly modesty and reserve! Having sketched my Beauty and my Beast, I take up the thread of my narrative.

Mr. Grant sat looking on the flowing outline of the blushing milliner-girl.

"Do you often wait upon your customers in this manner?"

"No, sir, I have never done so before. But I like a walk in the early morning hours, and the walk from the village to Grantland is so beautiful," said Rosa, for the first time daring to raise her eyes.

"Beautiful! most beautiful!" he exclaimed, quickly. "You are right, Miss Bloom, the walk is very beautiful."

Not the walk, I was sure, but the eyes, struck him as being so beautiful. Mr. Grant was really impolite, so unmercifully did he scan the poor girl beside him. He seemed to be electrified by her beauty; while Rosa sat like a perfect martyr, doubtless praying to be released.

Now, in came Miss Pocahontas, shuffling and cavorting in a most theatrical manner.

"Heavens!" thought I, "behold the owner of a million! Behold the envied possessor of Washington, Powhatan, Pocahontas, Pauline Borghese, Melancholy, and a host of other rare and curious things, not to mention the nonchalant!"

"Fie, Max, you have your interview before mine! Do you not see he has designs upon you, my dear?" said this

interesting specimen of feminality, pointing her long bony finger playfully at her brother, and then extending her hand to Rosa.

"Miss Joyner," said Rosa faintly, almost afraid to gasp my plebeian name.

Miss Grant looked down upon me as she would upon a reptile, and raised her brows haughtily. I kept my seat. I neither curtsied, or nodded, or betrayed any knowledge of my presentation to the royal Indian dame. I flattered myself that I had done the thing capitally. Satisfying herself, at a glance, that I was both deaf and dumb, Miss Grant resumed her playful remarks.

This lady was lean, lank, long, cadaverous, yellow as saffron, and, as the doctors would say, of a lymphatic, or anti-sanguineous temperament. She had a hundred false curls streaming from her too youthful cap. A white wrapper fluttered about her angular figure, and she stood mincing her words, jerking out witticisms, intermingled with spasmodic ha ha's, and all the time wriggling, and twisting, and swaying, like a line of "ole clo" in a brisk breeze.

Rosa, humble as she was, had a decided hauteur when in the presence of her superiors, and she was as calm as a Madonna under the bold eyes of the brother, and the delightfully wicked eyes of the more versatile and jocund sister.

"Yes," said Pocahontas, carrying her innocent jest too

far, "my dear Max is for once in love; I declare decidedly smitten."

Mr. Grant's dull eyes emitted some sparks, as Rosa drew up her proud figure, and bent her fathomless eyes upon his sister. Again her lustrous eyes flashed, and darted disdain from their glowing depths; but she was not the girl to allow any indignation she might feel, to compromise her beautiful propriety and dignity of manner. She calmly, but with compressed lips, took up the band-box, and ended the rapid tide of compliments and jests, by saying she would accompany Miss Grant to her room, if she pleased.

"Pocahontas, see!" cried Mr. Grant, pointing to the band-box in Rosa's hands. The lady turned about, and jerked out a little scream for Jemima, who immediately appeared and relieved Rosa of the offending box.

We followed Miss Grant to her room. Here the cap was taken out, examined, tried on, and highly approved. Miss Grant complimenting the placid Rosa on her genius and taste in cap-making. Little did she dream of the treasures lying deep in that unruffled bosom, like gems in a pearly sea. Little did she dream of the heroic endurance, the uncomplaining fortitude, the silent, carefully hidden grief, and the sublime religion of that fair, delicate girl.

Miss Pocahontas paid Mrs. Bloom's bill, and we bowed and retired. As I returned through the exquisite, octa-

gonal saloon, I could but compare Mr. Grant and his sister with those *chef d'œuvres* of master minds, which their wealth had collected around them. Before the inner gate, which was held open by a well-dressed servant, stood a handsome carriage. Mr. Grant himself was in attendance, and from appearances, I sagely hazarded the thought that all things were ready to favour us humble pedestrians with a ride.

"Allow me the honour, Miss," said Mr. Grant, offering to lead Rosa to the carriage.

"I think we had better walk," she said, timidly.

But the sun shone fiercer than when we came, the air was hot and sultry, a rumbling cloud hung low in the dark northwest, all nature drooped beneath the fervent sunbeams, and a deathlike stillness reigned, as though the cattle cowered in silence before the impending storm. Mr. Grant declared it would rain before we could reach home. I assisted his efforts with my eyes; for if I have a weakness, it is in dearly loving a ride. Rosa almost consented; her tiny foot was on the broad steps, her hand in Mr. Grant's,—she drew back, and thanked him, but believed she had rather walk. Her quick eye had seen Stuart coming armed with umbrellas and shawls.

"See, Rosa, I am come for you!" cried Stuart, quickening his pace as he saw how matters stood. Mr. Grant released her, for he could not yet dispute the proud title of the betrothed.

"Provoking!" he muttered, ordering his astonished coachman to put up.

"Delightful!" murmured the lover, taking Rosa on one arm, and me on the other, and walking gaily away.

Stuart, with his ladye-love on his arm, was superlatively happy. Meantime the wind was rising very perceptibly, and I am sorry to say, that on this occasion, the elements seemed combined to make Rosa repent of her folly. The trees, lashed by the furious gale, reeled, and tottered, and stretched forth their giant arms, and threatened to crush us in their death embrace. The north wind rolled, and tumbled, and boiled in its rage; and then the clouds gathered rapidly and ominously, and hung over us in their black wrath. A flash, and then a terrific peal, and the strife was begun. The thunderbolts of heaven were bursting over us. Huge drops pattered over our heads, and rolled down our burly umbrellas. We quickened our pace, and looked at each other in dismay. I, expecting every minute to be struck by the incessant lightning, began to wish myself in a feather bed. Rosa, to comfort Stuart, who reproached himself, declared she was very snug and comfortable indeed, under her great unmanageable awning. Never did three weather-beaten wayfarers strive more heroically to bear up against circumstances. We smiled dismally at each other from under our respective roofs, and once or twice made an attack upon conversation. But the breeze stiffened, and the rain came down in torrents. I

may say, perfect sheets of rain came slanting down upon me and my umbrella. Finding the wind was making desperate efforts to deprive me of my valued friend, the umbrella, I concentrated all my strength of mind and body, and prepared for the tug of war. I was a weak little woman, but I clinched my teeth, held on with might and main, and ploughed my way in a determined and energetic manner. Not so, Rosa and her lover. They had but one umbrella between them, and what with her efforts to shield him, and his efforts to protect her, they managed to get saturated. They came on slowly after me, like a pair of drowned rats in a procession.

"My poor Rosa is so tired, struggling against this hard wind, that perhaps I had better carry her in my arms, Miss Nancy," said Stuart, looking ruefully at me, while the fast-falling rain-drops caused him to wink and blink in a most ludicrous manner.

"H-o-l-d the umbrella!" I shouted; for, in his unguarded moment, the wind had snatched it from him; and while his whole soul was bent on capturing that indispensable commodity, it nimbly relieved him of his hat, and our lover was in a sorrowful plight, which, with the additional satisfaction of seeing Miss Rosa standing bolt upright in the rain, like a duck, must have made him very comfortable.

"Now," said I, completely out of all patience, "you have done for yourselves, both of you. Can't you be

made to know that there is a time for nonsense, and love-talk, and a time for other things?"

"Including harangues," replied Stuart, like a Stoic.

"Never mind, never mind," he continued, rubbing his hands and trying to call up a smile, while the umbrella and hat were measuring their strength, at a furious rate, down the avenue to Grantland.

"Never mind," he remarked, as they jostled and tripped each other up; "storms and blasts are nothing with you, Rosa. We can leave these things famously together; can we not, my adorable girl?"

Finding nothing could check their nonsense, I handed them my umbrella, and started off on my own hook. I hopped over dimpling pools of water, and slipped and sloshed about, now going like Cousin Sally Dillard, or rather like "my wife," through swollen streams, and now looking out narrowly for a bit of terra firma for my soaking feet.

"Ho! for the bonnet sign, long may it wave!" I cried, taking care of number one, and running briskly on. To my supreme satisfaction, I was soon sheltered under the charming roof of Mrs. Bloom's fancy millinery.

"We are too late, Miss Nancy," said Stuart, throwing aside his streaming umbrella, and pointing to the heavy clouds which rolled away like a scroll.

Rosa and I, completely drenched, quickly sought our rooms. No so that hero, Stuart. He was made of very

insoluble stuff. He could still, with folded arms, walk majestically up and down the porch, and even hum a sprightly air.

They say pride is neither too hot nor too cold, and I should say that love was seldom troubled with rain, at least; and that a ducking was only so much fresh fuel thrown on the flames. I hope the reader understands me as speaking from observation, and I want it perfectly understood, that, experimentally, I say nothing.

Stuart's love, then, being unto him as one of Goodyear's gum-elastic overcoats, that young man was eminently snug and comfortable; and being unable altogether to control these feelings, sang out, most cheerfully, many popular airs, such as "Come share my cottage, gentle maid," "Our way across the mountain, ho! ho! ho! ho!" &c.

During this highly melodious serenade, we dressed, and descended once more into the parlour.

"Did the caps suit at last?" inquired Mrs. Bloom of her daughter.

"Miss Grant was highly pleased," replied Rosa.

"And Mr. Grant highly displeased; eh! my pretty rose-bud?" said the lover, coming in, and drawing a chair beside his lady-love.

"How so?" inquired the mother quickly.

"He was not, indeed, mamma," urged Rosa.

"Ah! but I think he was," repeated Stuart.

"Displeased about what?" the widow inquired carelessly.

"Why Rosa would not ride in his carriage," said Stuart. "Was not that enough to break his heart, if he has one, my dear Madam?"

"How is this, *she* would not? Was Mr. Grant's carriage offered her, and she *dared* refuse it?"

"Yes, Madam," said I, joining in, as *mal-a-propos* as usual.

"Mr. Grant also offered himself, as her escort, and she refused him! Now, my dear Madam, do not cry out treason!"

"Was the girl mad, foolish, dreaming, insane!" yelled the mother, now fairly aroused. "Did you do this! Say quickly, Miss—or—" And she stood over her daughter menacingly. I had unwittingly aroused the lioness. I cowered in a corner, while she roared. Rosa sat calm and placid, and immovable as a statue.

"Yes, mamma, I preferred to walk," she said, raising her eyes undismayed.

"Then go, Miss—take your hat, retrace your steps, without your famous Stuart, or any other chosen spirit, and make your humble apologies to Mr. Grant. Go, I say to you, go!"

Her stern finger pointed to the door.

"See, it rains again," said Rosa, hesitating.

"Go—go!" shouted Mrs. Bloom, in terrific tones.

Poor Rosa took her bonnet, and was about to obey.

"She shall not go!" cried Stuart, catching her in his arms, as she endeavoured to pass him.

"Who dares to dispute my authority? Rosa, once more I say to you, go!"

"She shall not," exclaimed the young man, detaining her, "she shall not, though I die for it. I dispute such authority, now and for ever!"

"Very well, my youngster!" replied the widow, with supreme contempt. "Pray make the most of this little brief authority, so new to a sub-agent. Pray use this rare power on all occasions—not only to show off with, my dear, subordinate sir, but that you may the sooner exhaust it. Go on, most puissant sir, defending damsels from their mothers, and verily Mr. Hepburn's man-of-all-work shall open his eyes, and see what he shall see!"

"You are as prophetic as severe, Madam," said Stuart, taking off Rosa's hat, and drying the poor girl's tears.

Now, Mrs. Bloom was not a lady to be thwarted. She was a perfect Napoleon of a woman, and all who knew her, knew it was useless to strive against her. After her awful pronunciamiento, she went to her room, threw on her best black silk, her new bonnet, and mantle, drew on her lilac gloves, and with her parasol in one hand and her famous steel bag in the other, descended into our midst. Not a word had we spoken. Rosa sat with her hand in Stuart's, and her cheeks moist with tears. I, drawn up in

a remote corner, was engaged in devising the best method of making myself as small as possible.

The august sovereign of the realm of the bonnet sign, as terrible in her wrath as she was delightful in her gentler moods, drew a chair and calmly awaited the coming of the April sun. He came, as though at her ambrosial nod, parted the deep voluminous clouds, twinkled and shone upon a thousand crystal drops, stretched his mammoth brow from heaven to earth, and, before the storm-king, came off conqueror.

How beautiful, and tender, and relenting, shone the fickle April day, and the magnificent drapery of heaven grew gorgeous in crimson and golden folds.

"Miss Joyner," said the queen, bending her kindling eye full upon her.

"Mrs. Bloom!" I ejaculated, my voice indulging in a demi-semiquaver shake in spite of my boasted prowess and nerve.

"You are so fond of accompanying people to Grantland, that perhaps you will do me the favour to accompany *me*."

"Madam!" I gasped in dire affright, my eyes starting from their sockets, and my brain becoming muddled.

"I have said all I have to say, Miss."

The lady arose in her majesty, and the rustle of her new black silk fell upon my heart like the death-rattle of a

rattlesnake. Obeying a look from Rosa, I snatched my bonnet and darted after her.

I did not dare to walk beside this capricious, tyrannical, and ferociously aristocratic milliner. She could awe me and subdue me more completely than anybody under the sun. Born to command, with a temper brooking no control, Mrs. Bloom walked and looked the queen.

I folded my arms meekly across my breast, and, as little darkies are wont to follow their mistresses, so followed I the mighty Mrs. Bloom to Grantland. On the marble steps I accidentally jostled her, and, for the first time, she seemed conscious of my presence. She pulled the bell, which summoned its echo, the nonchalant. With a magnificent indifference he waived us into a medium reception-room, and left us to our fates. Again Mrs. Bloom seemed to forget my presence. Some closed doors tempted her; she opened them, and a perfect blaze of splendour rewarded her. Tall mirrors, in which were reflected some scores of Mrs. Blooms, peeping curiously—pictures, whose massive frames shamed the timid artist's power, and drew all eyes from the living canvass to the nimble carver's elaborate work. But the carpet! the carpet now fastened the widow's eyes, which had been "in a fine phrenzy rolling." On her bended knee she examined this rare fabric.

"Behold," thought I, "a worshipper of Mammon! who would offer to the god of this world the most spotless sacrifice in his domains!"

Footsteps! Quickly Mrs. Bloom resumes her seat, and, at a minute's warning, becomes the most sedate and least curious matron in all the land.

Miss Grant's handsome maid, with puffed hair, and a voluminous apron, now made her appearance. With an air and a grace, and an easy politeness, which her mistress might have copied with decided advantage, she conducted us through spacious ways to Pocahontas' morning room. Here, amid poodle dogs and seamstresses, we found that elegant female, with smelling-bottle at nose, indulging in a lounge.

"Mrs. Bloom?" exclaimed she with the royal Indian blood; though from her appearance, one would say there was but little of that precious stuff in her veins, Mr. Grant having a great deal more of the blood of his ancestors, than the lovely specimen before us.

"The same, Miss," ejaculated our widow, advancing respectfully.

"Well, Mrs. Bloom, you and your woman will please be seated."

Now, *my* blood, from whoever it came, boiled and blazed like any warrior's.

"Ho!" thought I, "if I ever am to fight, I had rather take it now!" Then, more subdued, I began to inquire of myself: "And is it come to this, I—a respectable teacher of the glorious, time-honoured, genius-worshipped science of music—dwindled down into Mrs. Bloom's woman?"

'Hail, Columbia, happy land!' I will not raise my voice against thy admirable social arrangements. Here, every dog has his day. Here one cannot tell one day what one may be the next; therefore, does it not behoove us to be moderate in prosperity, and hopeful in adversity? No, not one word against thee, my country. Though I be buffeted by highflyers, unto my dying day, may God bless and keep our model republic!"

"I have no work in your hands just now—have I, Mrs. Bloom? Your daughter brought the head-dress home this morning," said Pocahontas, her high cheek-bones and flat forehead, speaking up boldly for the Indian blood.

"For that reason am I come, Miss," commenced the widow, crossing her hands on her lap, and favouring her "woman" with a fierce side-look, which plainly bade her listen, but contradict at her peril.

"My poor timid child, Rosa, behaved in rather an unlady-like manner this morning, to your kind and condescending brother."

"Indeed! I had not heard," lisped Pocahontas, relapsing into beautiful ignorance on all plebeian topics. Mrs. Bloom proceeded with some little embarrassment.

"Your charming brother was gracious enough to offer Rosa a seat in his carriage this morning. She, being so timid, hesitated, and finally—I blush to say it—declined the signal honour. She feared it would be unbecoming in one of her humble station to accept so high an honour, and

I am come, Miss, to make her humble and heartfelt apologies."

"Maximilian has been particularly dull to-day," remarked Miss Grant.

"Oh, how particularly dull Maximilian must have been!" I mentally and maliciously exclaimed.

"He admires your beautiful daughter exceedingly, Madam; and when those friends of your late husband became short of funds, he advanced five hundred dollars towards the completion of her education, merely because he could not bear to see such angelic loveliness deprived of the smallest attraction for the want of the base coin. He could not bear to see your daughter unendowed with those graces imparted by education. My brother, totally disinterested and ingenuous, had a right to expect marked respect from her, to say the least, Mrs. Bloom. Nay, should he not have looked for some faint betrayal of gratitude from one so favoured,—some of that fragrant incense which so sweetly rewards one's charity?"

"True! true!" cried the widow, with streaming eyes and clasped hands. "Generous man! she should kneel to him, and kiss the ground on which he walks! She should—"

Just as Mrs. Bloom was arranging a sublime peroration for this pathetic rhapsody, Mr. Grant entered. Ruby red, and fat, he gratefully inclined his ear to the fluent eloquence of our admirable milliner. With a slight nervous

twitching he received the lady's apologies, and listened, with many faces, to compliments temptingly dressed and piquantly seasoned. Mr. Grant kindly drew a chair. He handed his gloves and walking-stick to his man, and proceeded to be as complaisant and delightful as Mrs. Bloom could have desired. He repeated the morning's misadventure, on which Mrs. Bloom had so recently dwelt, and again he recounted how Rosa first said she would ride, and then drew back, and said she wouldn't. He then told it all over again without the slightest deviation. And then, once more, he dwelt upon this unparalleled event in the annals of Grantland, for it was one of this gentleman's interesting habits to repeat long-winded stories, until his hearers were taken with the fidgets. But nothing could disturb Mrs. Bloom's profound attention—no fatigue of ear or eye shake her from her purpose. She listened with visible delight. With renewed emotions she listened again, while Mr. Grant continued his interminable remarks,—going around his elbow to get to his thumb,—and when fairly off, as everybody thought, in this wonderful narrative, behold! he would halt, turn back, and retrace his steps, to say something, which, if there is any truth in me, the man had said fifty times before. Still Mrs. Bloom was charmed—fascinated—electrified.

"Pon honour! I never saw Miss Rosa so interesting. It was first she would, and then she wouldn't. Now, all this is infinitely more winning than a bold, unhesitating

'Yes.' 'Pon honour! I like these little airs; that is, they set off a beauty, but won't do for the hard-favoured. But Miss Rosa's my beauty; her little airs are so taking. 'Pon honour! half the boys in town are smitten, and some of the old ones too, I declare. Ha! ha! charming girl, Mrs. Bloom. Keep her close, she'll do mischief,—she will, indeed!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" softly gurgled the delighted mother. Really, Mr. Grant was so witty, she was obliged to laugh aloud. She see-sawed in her rocking-chair—she swam with delight—nothing could exceed Mr. Grant's happy narrative. She was no longer the stern-hearted milliner, the cold, calculating, unfeeling mother, but the victim of warm impulses, the possessor of that impassioned soul now being borne resistlessly away by Mr. Grant's inimitable recital.

Suddenly, up rose the couchant Pocahontas upon the sharp point of her elbow, and requested Mrs. Bloom to lay aside her hat and mantle, and dine with her. Quickly the widow obeyed, and that was a proud moment for the relict of Major Bloom.

"Now, how must Mrs. Bloom's woman dispose of herself?" I mentally inquired; "she is expected to resort to the kitchen, of course."

I glided quietly out, took up the avenue in a long trot, and almost out of breath, reached that delightful haven, the millinery, once more.

"Your mamma dines out," said I, doggedly, to Rosa.

"Mamma dines out!" she echoed, amazed.

"The queen dines out!" cried Stuart, laughing. "Very well, we dine in. Call up cook,—order covers for three! Down with your sewing, Rosa! There's an old adage, 'When the cat's away, the rats will play,' which really hits off the present providential interposition with admirable precision."

Stuart was in for a frolic, and seemed to take a wicked delight in doing the very things in Mrs. Bloom's absence, which, bold as he was, he never did in her presence. Taking Rosa on his arm, he approached the French mirror as one would have approached the veiled prophet; demurely, and with becoming awe, he drew aside the curtain which, from time immemorial, had concealed that honoured piece of furniture, and then he contemplated with great satisfaction the picture it revealed.

"I say, Miss Nancy, approach with uncovered head, and let your eyes feast on this mysterious mirror, now so unexpectedly and miraculously brought to light."

"Indeed!" said I, still pondering on the words, 'Mrs. Bloom's 'woman.'"

"Ah! ne'er did Grecian chisel trace—" commenced the lover, looking fondly down upon the girl on his arm.

"Spare me!" cried Rosa, blushing.

"A nymph, a naiad, or a—"

"Do not—really you are cruel!" plead poor Rosa, thus overwhelmed with his poetry.

"Hag or haunt!" I roared, now reaching the explosive point—"more fitly modelled than Miss Grant!"

"Why what has come over Miss Nancy? I am afraid she was not invited to dine out to-day."

"I would not have dined with her if she had given me fifty invitations," said I.

"We all know *that*," said Stuart, laughing; "but of course you had the honour of declining. I tell you, Rosa, these little ladies are tremendous at a safe distance. Miss Nancy is a terribly vindictive and valiant little able-bodied woman—if people only knew it."

Stuart was determined to have his laugh at my expense, but I was at boiling heat; I was as mad as a March hare.

"If ever she dares to treat me again as she has this morning," said I, raising my arm in dire wrath towards Grantland, "I'll"—

"Run home as fast as you can; will you not, Miss Nancy? You'll give them a rare example of your get-along-ative-ness!" said this hilarious young man.

"I'll let her know I am not to be trampled on, that's all. There's an end to my endurance, as she shall know some day, to her sorrow."

"Very good, very good, indeed!" continued my tormentor, gravely. "That is what I call heroism, the genuine article, depend upon it. Remember, we must

hold ourselves in readiness, and when Miss Nancy cries, 'On to the charge!' there must be no cowardly running from the enemy."

"I am not joking, sir."

"Nor I."

"Ha! ha! ha!"

Rosa's merry laugh changed the vinegar of my aspect, and, like Mr. Grant, I related my morning's adventure.

CHAPTER III.

"Take heed, take heed, thou lovely maid,
Nor be by glittering ills betrayed,
Thyself, for money! Oh, let no man know
The price of beauty fallen so low!"

COWLEY.

OH, such a dinner as we had served up precisely at four on the day of our liberty! Cook, shining with delight, hitched up her urchin by the collar, and made him fly around the table. He dodged and dived about, did Shackleford, in a most remarkable manner. His morning dressings had endowed him with miraculous agility, and he created such confusion running about and about, knocking his shins against everybody's chair, threatening several times to carry off the cloth, and getting hung at every angle, not to mention a way he had of dipping the cuff of his sleeve into plates and dishes promiscuously, that I began to fear his reason had departed for ever. At last Stuart laid down his knife and fork, and seeing his phrenzied state, began to entreat the misguided youth to forbear, or he would not answer for the consequences,—or, if he *would* persist in his violent and break-neck proceedings,

he advised him solemnly, as a friend, first to call in a surgeon.

Order being restored, and our deluded and excited waiter brought to a state of comparative tranquillity, although still somewhat agitated, and very much disposed to fly off at a tangent, we ordered wine, and commenced sipping that delightful beverage. Stuart spoke mysteriously of one Mrs. Stuart, and bowed gravely to Rosa. At this, Cook, shaken from her propriety, and regardless of all etiquette, laughed loud and long. We did justice to Mrs. Bloom's wine. Two glasses raised me above all sublunary concerns. We also discussed the lady-milliner's fruits. We had oranges, pine-apples, and pecans.

"I say, Miss Nancy," said Stuart, "methinks we should now proceed to greet yon thunderbolt speeding down the hill."

I looked as he pointed, and lo! the Grant carriage was making furiously towards the millinery. The bonnet-sign shook visibly, nor was the bonnet-sign alone in that particular. We proceeded to the parlour. The coachman made a circle in front of Mrs. Bloom's millinery. With a high head the lady allowed Mr. Grant to assist her from the carriage. Accompanied by her escort she entered the parlour.

"Mr. Grant!" said she, pompously flourishing her hand towards us. Stuart gracefully acknowledged the lofty presentation; and, with a happy tact, which was ever his,

he commenced a conversation, in which Mr. Grant participated by a few, fat growls.

Mr. Grant had been eyeing Rosa for some minutes, but could not summon the resolution to address her. At last, he made a terrible face, and commenced hammering away with might and main, upon the following startling remarks.

"Hem—hem—I think the afternoons are getting to be—hem—rather milder—and the weather is—hem—very fine, Miss Rosa, very fine, indeed."

Rosa, naturally very silent in company, had no reply to make to these remarkable truths.

"I would like to take you to my sister's picnic on Friday, Miss Bloom. There will be a great many fine ladies there, Miss—ahem!"

"I should be happy to go, Mr. Grant; but where there are a great many fine ladies, is no place for a seamstress."

"Now, you are no seamstress. You should not say so, 'pon honour; if any man comes to me, and says, 'Grant, how is your pretty seamstress?' I would knock him down, I would, indeed I would, instantly knock him down."

"You are very kind, sir, but that could not alter the fact, you know," said Rosa, smiling at Mr. Grant's evident anxiety to make himself agreeable to her.

"Well, I say it once for all, you are no seamstress. You are no more a seamstress, Miss Rosa, than I am a jackanapes," said the millionaire, stoutly and chivalrously.

Mrs. Bloom, doubtless afraid that her huge protégé would wind up this interesting and highly *à propos* subject, by triumphantly proving both propositions, which it was his intention utterly to demolish, now chimed in with a gentle, lady-like ha! ha!

"Mr. Grant is so amusing," she said, turning blandly to me. "My dear sir, you can enter into one's feelings so well. Unfortunately we are indeed low in the eyes of the world to what we once were, but I fancy among the genuine aristocracy we are not lessened by earning an honest livelihood. At all events, so long as we can boast of Mr. Grant as our champion, we may bid the minority defiance. By your zeal in our cause, you have added to the many signal favours already conferred upon us, and our hearts are yours. Our hearts beat for you, sir, with noble pride."

"Then I am repaid tenfold," said Mr. Grant, rising to take his leave. "Miss Bloom, allow me to say that our house and everything it contains, including ourselves, are at your service. Since you regret a certain event, I no longer remember it."

Rosa scarcely knew what to say. She could not expose her mother's falsehood.

"I—I am—" she stammered.

"No more apologies, I assure you; you make me too happy."

Rosa would fain have explained; but, finding her new

lover about to go, she forbore,—she would not for the world detain him. Now, our milliner had done a great day's work. She had almost secured for her daughter the Hon. Maximilian Grant, the first man in the whole country. Having achieved this great end, she walked into her sewing-room, and alarmed the maidens congregated there in her usual happy manner.

"Rosa!" said Stuart, starting from a reverie.

"Well, sir?" said she.

"You looked provokingly beautiful this afternoon."

"Why do you say provokingly?" she inquired.

"Because—because—I wish you would so contrive it, my dear girl, as to look as ugly as you conveniently can, when that fellow, Grant, is about."

"Well done, Mr. Stuart!" cried I; "you are a pretty fellow, upon my word."

"Very pretty indeed, Miss Nancy. I thank you for that voluntary compliment to my personal appearance. But I must use all my artillery in the coming contest. When one loves a handsome girl, whom everybody else loves, it is very well to be a pretty fellow, Miss Nancy."

Rosa laughed, and dispelled all her lover's fears.

It was night. The milliner-girl sat with her long hair hanging, like a dense veil, over her fine person. She smoothed the shining masses, and arranged them for the night.

Mrs. Bloom sat beside a bit of tallow candle mending a

faded gown. I held Gil Blas in my hand, and was immersed in all the grand simplicity of Dr. Sangrado's practice, his warm water, and venesection.

"Rosa," said Mrs. Bloom; and it seemed that the widow's cheek was paler than usual, and her eye had lost some of its habitual sternness.

"What, mamma?"

"I think you undervalue yourself, my dear. You are no more conscious of your unrivalled beauty than a babe. Think of the admiration it commands everywhere. Have you no ambition, child? no power, skilfully to wield this mighty weapon? I tell you, your beauty is a treasure which few, very few, possess. Beauty like yours can accomplish anything. It has ranked above talent, above honour, above royalty. Why then, are you so silent, so retiring, so anxious to hide yourself from every eye? Rosa, Rosa, my gifted, darling child, you should look up high, very high. There is no pinnacle, believe me, that your beauty may not reach."

"Beauty! beauty!" said the girl thoughtfully. "Mamma, I had thought of endeavouring to become morally, what you say God has made me physically. I have pondered on the beauty of holiness, on the happiness of doing good, on the fleeting nature of this beauty, on which you would have me stake my all. Oh! there is a surer foundation on which to build one's hopes than that, mamma; you do not point me there!"

"Certainly, certainly," said the mother quickly, and looking askant at me, while I renewed my devotion to Gil Blas.

"All that does very well, and I am delighted to have my daughter pursuing so wise a course. Nevertheless, my dear, there are worldly considerations which, so long as we live in the world, must have their influence. We should not neglect physical graces bestowed upon us for a wise purpose. All talents must be improved, whether they be of mind or matter. You have ten talents; very well, you must double them. I have five, which I must no more neglect, than you your ten; therefore, I should double mine. Now," continued the widow, not forgetting the old spite against me, "say, for instance, our friend there has but one; which, for aught I know—"

"She will not dig a hole and bury, my dear Madam, but invest it well, and draw a prize, for aught we know," said I, closing my book, and feeling at liberty to defend my poor talent.

"Would," cried the lady, raising her really very fine eyes—"would that some people's ambition were proportioned to their qualifications, and would that some people's meagre qualifications were remotely proportioned to their overweening ambition!"

"What a fine thing that would be for some people!" I remarked facetiously.

"Very fine, indeed, for one poor blind soul of my recent acquaintance," retorted the dignified relict of Major Bloom.

"I cannot possibly imagine to whom you allude, my dear Madam," said I, quietly.

A silence ensued. We were only playful, the widow and I. It was a way we had, to cut at each other in this brilliant style. We were like a pair of kittens, making velvety dabs at each other, and now and then showing our claws. Rosa sat silent and pensive. Poor girl! she was too pure for poverty. Had she been placed in a higher sphere, how holy and gentle would have been her influence! What a beautiful light upon the hill! But when want presses sorely, and youth is discouraged, and its glowing fires quenched, 'tis hard to toil on uncheered in the straight path, when one remove would raise us to grandeur and affluence; nay, to honour among men. Mrs. Bloom, with an eloquence I cannot describe, for she was a magnificently gifted woman, pointed to all the world calls great, and bade her daughter, for whom she had toiled until she was weary, take it and give her rest—take it, and cheer her declining years—take it, and restore her to the social position to which she rightly belonged—take it, and gladden her poor mother's heart.

Mrs. Bloom turned to me, her voice modulated into a pathos most touching, and said, "Miss Nancy, I have struggled on, God knows how bravely. I have worked

day and night in my lonely house, buoyed up by this sole thought: 'Never mind, never mind,' I would say, when the winds blew cold, and my last cent was gone, 'my Rosa will soon come home, and then, welcome prosperity! Her beauty will draw custom to my deserted rooms—her beauty will attract admirers—her beauty will relieve her bowed mother from eternal toil, toil, toil.' Well, Miss Nancy, my daughter came. Her beauty achieved more than I could have hoped. It commands wealth, and power, and happiness, and honour. But she rejects it all. She had rather see the mother who gave her life toil on thanklessly. She will not sacrifice one feeling for her mother, who has made herself a living sacrifice for her!"

Mrs. Bloom's intonations were worthy of a Siddons. She was a powerful actress, and her eloquence was irresistible.

"Mamma! mamma!" cried the girl, with the earnest, true heart, "oh, why do you speak thus! Why do you urge me thus, dear mamma?"

"Why, Rosa—simply because this is all I have to urge, my child. Surely, I need not tell you why I speak thus to you. My love urges me. A mother who can forget the interests of her child is a monster. I would snatch you from the misery I have endured. I would lead my gentle girl, because her inexperience would mislead her."

Again silence fell upon us. Rosa arose, pale and sad,

and withdrew with her trembling, "Good night." The lily was bowed to the earth.

"Mrs. Bloom! Mrs. Bloom!" cried I, "do not let ambition crush so sweet a flower!"

"Miss Nancy, Miss Nancy! do not meddle with other people's affairs!" she retorted crisply.

I was gone in a twinkling. I was glad to escape to my room with my head upon my shoulders. Having reached a place of safety, I fell to ruminating upon the unruffled life the deceased Major must have led with his placid and amiable companion. Engaged in these reflections, I sat idly shaking my foot, a habit peculiar to myself, and one conducive of great comfort, particularly if the mind be perturbed.

"Miss Nancy," said some one at my door. I looked up and Rosa stood before me.

"Why, Rosa," said I, "I thought you were in bed and asleep."

"Asleep! Miss Nancy; I am too miserable to sleep. For days, and for long, long nights, I have been awake—awake to all the sorrows of my unhappy life."

I said nothing, but handed her a chair. I knew some of the tortures this poor young creature endured; but I did not know them all. Still, no murmur had ever before escaped her lips in my presence. She bore it all with a holy resignation and meekness, approaching the sublime—enduring, with angel sweetness, what she would not

reveal—allowing duty to be paramount in her gentle bosom, and breathing only to Him who had fashioned her as she was, the sorrows and trials He had fitted her to bear. And though Mrs. Bloom was a tyrant, and forgot all tenderness in her anxiety to secure her ends, this beautiful girl never once, under all temptations, swerved from the strict line of duty.

“Surely,” thought I, “if there be pity and love in heaven, she will have her reward.”

Rosa raised her head and said, “Miss Nancy, will you go with me to-night?”

“Go with you where, Rosa?”

“To Mr. Hepburn’s.”

“To Mr. Hepburn’s! My dear girl, I cannot go with you to this Mr. Hepburn’s. Pray, what would people think of me to go prowling up street, and arousing a stranger at this hour?”

“But go with me. I have been wanting to see Mr. Hepburn a long time. Will you go?”

Her face, so pale and sad, her eyes, so mournfully pleading, decided me.

“Well, child, to gratify you, I go. The world is nothing to me, my dear; its empty chit-chat I despise.”

“Thank you, thank you, a thousand times!” Quickly she led the way, while I, like a shadow of the night, followed. Up a broad, spacious street she led me. Not a breath disturbed the peaceful citizens of Centreville. The

moon was gone, and the stars hung in clustered lights above us. My white-robed guide flits before me. She dives into an old oak grove. She steals beside the churchyard. She walks in beauty under the aspen’s gleaming shade. Her rapid footsteps cease.

“Miss Nancy.”

“Here,” I whispered, advancing. She grasped my hand, and led me up some stern gray steps. She pushed aside a creaking door, and, behold, we were in the presence of Josiah Hepburn, the Astor of Southern Virginia. I had no time to glance around me, but I felt that the walls were cold and dark. I was chilled through. I trembled nervously. A stern, pale figure emerged from the dim background, and bade us be seated.

“Mr. Hepburn, you bade me come to you. Well, I am sick at heart, and I am come.”

“My poor, poor girl, you are come when I am bowed by a new affliction. You are come when I, too, am seeking consolation for my forsaken heart, and can find none. Behold! I am the spectre of woe; the grim shadow of life’s keenest agony; the sorry, shattered remnant that misery has left; the shape that has endured all that flesh is heir too; and to me, to *me*, you come, my poor unfortunate girl, for consolation! I can tell you how to nerve up an iron will, and bear; I can tell you how to hide your grief in your own tortured bosom; but no more. I cannot bid you hope, or show you the way to happiness!”

Ah! there was something in that voice which cut the heart like steel, it was so clear, so searching, so unmerciful in its bitter, bitter coldness.

Rosa seemed discomfited. She sat some moments with her head upon her hand. A light shone from the flickering tin lamp, and I stood transfixed. It revealed, just before me, a superb painting,—a virgin and child. The virgin so celestial, so gentle, so pure, was exquisitely portrayed. Her eye, full of compassion, rested on me. Ha! she was like Rosa! The perfect contour, the very attitude. I started. I glanced at the serene, angelic face of the beautiful girl, and I looked again at the painting. Rosa's eye, so thrilling, so piercing, yet so heavenly benign, started from the canvass. I could not suppress an exclamation. The man, torn by sorrow and remorse, turned upon me.

"If anything startle you, any fancied resemblance, pray do not disturb us with your jackall cries."

Under what star was I born? What else had fate in store for me, her ill-used victim? Mrs. Bloom despised me; Miss Grant sneered at me; and the singular personage before me had called me a jackall. Here, out of pure good nature, I had been flying about from pillar to post, from early morning until bed-time, and it was evident that I was raising up enemies at every turn. I was determined that Mrs. Bloom and her daughter might pay their remarkable visits unattended by me. I was done playing the lacquey, and I may say the foot-ball. Old Hepburn bent his shaggy

brows. Ho! I darted out of the lion's den. To be eaten up alive, was all I now prayed to be spared, and away I went, urged by the keenest of all my instincts, that of self-preservation. Rosa came quickly after me, and without a word, we ran back to the millinery, like a pair of belated shades, when unexpectedly overtaken by the light. We reached my room without further molestation, and I began to pant and blow at a mad rate.

"My dear," said I, "I do not desire to solicit your confidence; but, I fancy, you did not succeed in whatever you undertook to-night."

"True, my dear friend. My sad life has been one continued failure of every hope my poor heart dared to cherish. Mr. Hepburn has been more like a father to me than a friend; but even *he* has no consolation for me. Fate and mamma, urge me on; and I go, even though they drive me from Stuart, and thrust me into Mr. Grant's castle."

"But," said I, "Mr. Hepburn never seeks you here as a father. How is this?"

"Alas!" cried the girl, "must I blame mamma again? must I say, that she is accused of robbing Mr. Hepburn of his son? No, Miss Nancy, I will never charge my mother with that great unnatural sin."

"But, my dear girl," said I, "we will not pursue this disagreeable subject. Where you see doubts and perplexities, I only see a straight course, which is this: You are engaged to Stuart, with your mother's approbation;

then marry him the day after to-morrow, or sooner, if that will end this eternal domestic warfare. This simple act will save your mother much useless trouble in spreading unwieldy nets for larger fish, or in building up huge castles, which no milliner, however prosperous, or highly descended, should ever rear."

"All you say is very plain; but, nevertheless, I am entangled, and, notwithstanding my efforts, I cannot move freely."

"Rosa, you are too timid. You are afraid of Mr. Hepburn; afraid of your mamma; afraid of the world; and never willing to move without permission from everybody."

"No, Miss Nancy, I am afraid of doing wrong; afraid to bring unhappiness where it is my duty to bring all comfort and joy."

"Well, God bless you, my child! No lamb was ever more meet for the sacrifice. Lay down your head,—struggle no more. Your destiny was sketched for you by a greater than I, nor were you formed for any other."

"Miss Nancy! on whom I leaned for support—you, with your earnest heart, and strong good will,—alas! will you, too, remove from me?" cried the poor girl, with tears in her eyes.

She was so gentle and pure,—such a very woman in her weakness, and in her strength so willing to be led,—so anxious to do right—so fearful of the wrong—so touching in her love, and so stout-hearted in her duty,—that my heart

yearned for her. "Blessed," thought I, "the happy one who shall lead this gentle creature along the narrow way!" I turned to her, as she sat pensive and tearful, and said,—

"There is but one proper course, my dear, which I insist upon. By making the effort, and taking one decisive step, you end all these midnight visits, these Grant intrigues, these family jars, which are as ungenteel as they are unpleasant."

Rosa asked me to chalk out that happy course.

"Now, my dear girl," I commenced, "throw aside that strange, uneasy look, which savours of mystery and midnight rambles, and descend with me from the giddy height of double-refined romance, into those humbler regions ruled by common sense. Remember, you are no belle of lofty estate, but an humble bonnet-maker; and Stuart is no Amadis de Gaul, or incog. prince, but Mr. Hepburn's agent, or, to speak more properly, his overseer. He is receiving, it seems, the remarkable salary of five hundred dollars, half of which he expends in a far-fetched way of ultra charity, instead of saving it for his wife and family. Now, my dear, you, being uncommonly handsome, find yourself beset by the neighbouring gentry, who would fain steal you from your betrothed. Your mother particularly connives at the attentions of one Mr. Grant, whose sheep eyes do not speak up fast enough for the good lady. You plainly perceive the end towards which these machinations tend. But you do not stoutly meet them; and, by a

straightforward course, which never yet failed to burst these invincible meshes, break from them. You act exactly as these skilful diplomatists would have you act. You are first Stuart's, and then your mamma's. You waver and falter. Your indecision allows them ample time to plot deeper and deeper, while you find yourself more and more entangled. You come, spectre-like, to me at the dead hours of the night, and drag me, nolens volens, to an ogre's castle. Again you are repulsed; whereupon you fly home with your heart in your mouth, and cry out to me, 'What shall I do! what shall I do!' I will tell you what to do. Have the wedding the day after to-morrow, and untie these knots, by tying another which cannot be broken."

Rosa started.

"The day after to-morrow! Miss Nancy, Mr. Hepburn says—"

"Don't tell me what Mr. Hepburn says. It is my opinion that man is not responsible for anything he says."

"Stuart says, he is a great and good man."

"I don't pretend to think that Stuart knows everything under the sun. I do not pin my faith to him, nor anybody else. Stuart calls Mr. Hepburn his kind benefactor. I took it upon myself to question the nature of these mighty benefits, which, it seems, have bound that knowing young man for life to this kind benefactor. They resolved themselves into the following interesting items, viz.: Mr. Hep-

burn has a scapegrace, whom he justly disinherits, and an agent whom he professes to love. He casts the one off without a cent; he doles out to the other the pitiful sum of five hundred per annum. Nor does this great and good man, this kind benefactor, increase that salary, though he well knows how one-half of it is spent. Now, I ask, who is the kind benefactor, Mr. Hepburn or Stuart? Which is the great and good man, Mr. Hepburn or Stuart?

"Besides, Rosa, here is a maxim of my life, the truth of which is thrust upon me at every turn. Never trust these highly unnatural characters; they are but poor specimens of humanity. I expect to see a great and good man frank and open in his dealings with his fellow-men. I expect to find him charitable, whether he be rich or poor; going his way pleasantly and kindly; bearing burdens which oppress the weak, and gently leading the wanderer by his counsel, and the wisdom of his ways, along the straight path. I never yet saw a good man scowling upon the world—shutting himself up—turning a deaf ear to all—and becoming a miser and a hypochondriac. Perhaps an over sensitive man, by some dreadful calamity—some powerful misfortune, might be driven to this; but believe me, a true, good, human heart is seldom forced to such extremes. When one support fails, we see it clinging to another; and when deprived of every earthly blessing, even then, it is not callous and morose. It is but purified, and we find it looking to a surer resting-place.

"I say, have the marriage the day after to-morrow, and thus end a series of perplexities which may colour your whole life."

"But Mr. Hepburn says Stuart must first accomplish a great work, which he alone can accomplish."

"Fiddlesticks! before Stuart accomplishes his work, Mrs. Bloom will have finished hers. Go to your room, my dear; when Stuart comes, say you will marry him the day after to-morrow."

"I hasten my wedding-day! I go to Stuart and urge him to consent to have the marriage the day after to-morrow! Methinks I must see some more formidable ogres—some more gigantic Mr. Grants, before I can summon the resolution to do that!"

She turned away. My rough common sense had jarred upon some fine silver chords in the fair maiden's bosom.

CHAPTER IV.

"What was I about to say? By the mass, I was
About to say something. Where did I leave?"

HAMLET.

SOME time after our midnight ramble, I gave Rosa her first music-lesson. I sat beside her. I counted my one, two, three, four, most pertinaciously; I stamped vehemently. I gave her a stereotyped lecture on notes, and their relations; and finding myself in my old element, I discoursed at some length on time, rests, &c. She smiled, and nodded her head. She understood me perfectly. She ran her light fingers over the keys, and commenced an andante movement, which was more natural, more beautiful than her astonished teacher, with all her clumsy science, could perform. Like all geniuses, she was not slow to prove her superiority. With a graceful bound, she cleared all those obstacles, over which I had toiled for years. My services were useless here. She could run scales by instinct, make chords of her own, and play her wild melodies with a lightness and grace, which too much science would but encumber.

Stuart came in. She sang for him, fresh and wild, and

sad, and bird-like; and brought tears to his eyes, by a pathos which defied all rule. I, too, yielded to the feelings which her magic modulations inspired. Her clear voice seemed to bend and circle caressingly around the heart. It nestled in the great sanctum where our hidden feelings lie. Nor did the flute-like voice probe them, or jar upon the tenderest chord. It only soothed, and warbled consolation in its dulcet tones; and where great sorrows lay, she invoked a pleasing melancholy, which, now and then, came out of the great deep, and gambolled sportively. She is no common bonnet-maker; shame upon the mother who ties her to such a calling. She is the embodiment of all we know of the Beautiful. Her person, but the cast of her mind, pure and unsullied, and holy. Stuart, enamoured and bewitched, prolonged his stay. He hung upon her clear vibrations, as upon the golden strings of life.

Now, Mrs. Bloom, above stairs, hearing of the lover's felicity, sent one of her sewing-girls down for Rosa. Her company was desired in the saloon. Mrs. Bloom knew this was a tender point with Stuart. He could not bear to see his beloved thus ornamenting a saloon open to all the loungers about town. He could not bear for this fop and that, to twirl his moustache, and say, "A fine bust, by Jove!" or "What captivating eyes the milliner has!" Mrs. Bloom herself, was too proud to allow her daughter often to show herself above stairs. Indeed, I may say,

she never appeared there, unless some of the Grant family inquired particularly for her.

Thus, my dear reader, a Virginian of the genuine stock never forgets his dignity—never permits the aristocratic blood to slumber or sleep. Once an aristocrat, he will always be one. Hence you need not be surprised, when you encounter "blood" in the veins of carpenters, cobblers, tinkers, tobacco-rollers, and, as I have endeavoured to show, in milliners.

Indeed, there is too much "blood" in the old state. It needs depletion. What with "old bloods" and "young bloods," your narrator, who, if you remember, hails from a leather-breeches-maker, finds herself nobody at all; and unless my readers will defend me, I may get into a very sanguinary war, by this very paragraph.

But, as I was saying, for reasons best known to herself, Mrs. Bloom ordered her daughter up to the show-room. This command was no sooner conveyed to Rosa, than her *abandon* was gone. Her eyes were cast down; her *hauteur*, her statue-like immobility, came at the call; and Rosa, unlike the Rosa of the minute before, obeyed. As she left the room so still and cold, Stuart said to me.

"How different would she be in her proper sphere, poor girl! Chained to a calling, which, though humble, could yet be happy, were she spared the pangs, and torture, and constant surveillance of an unfeeling, ambitious mother."

"Oh," said I, "Rosa endures more than you wot of."

Mrs. Bloom, though unfeeling, is a powerful woman. She can turn and mould her daughter's inclinations in a masterly manner. She is the most absolute tyrant I ever saw, and will carry her point, though she die for it. She has the nerve and resolution of a dozen men. And if I were you, oh the pleasure I would take in thwarting her! In making a detour, and coming upon her unexpectedly! In playing that good old-fashioned game, called tit-for-tat."

"Ha! ha! ha! Why, Miss Nancy, you ladies are strange creatures. Do you think I have nothing to do but to amuse myself in heading Mrs. Bloom? Excuse me, but it seems to me that ladies, solely from the want of occupation sufficient to exercise a vigorous mind, can make more mountains out of mole-hills, and pursue a trifle to the death with keener relish, than men enjoy over the rarest bubbles of the day. I sometimes envy you the power of magnifying things, until all the world stands congregated within your little horizon, watching your every movement."

"Very well, sir!" said I, nettled of course; "make your great studies, and smile at our puny way of getting along. Put on your seven league boots, and march from here to never; snatch Mr. Hepburn's worthless son from his favourite haunts, and bring him here to harass his old father to death; and then, when you get time to look around you, you may find your lady-love perched in Mr. Grant's castle."

I learned that the fashionable, and clever Misses Gay, from the city, were above stairs. They were guests of Miss Grant's, were spending the summer at Grantland, and having nothing else to do on this uncommonly fine morning, had driven over to lounge an hour in Mrs. Bloom's fashionable rooms. They had brought a convoy of city beaus, who were, of course, dying to get a peep at the paragon of milliners. Poor Rosa was marshalled up to gratify this laudable curiosity. Mrs. Bloom witnessed, with pride, the impression made by her daughter. Saw her beauty astonish, her hauteur repel, her refinement and undoubted fashion keep them in check. Saw one and all, beau and belle, tacitly acknowledge her superiority; and Mrs. Bloom bustled down stairs. Pleasantly, and in a patronising manner, she bade Stuart good morning. With a high head she reached over me, and drew from a precious receptacle, a more precious silver waiter, of exquisite workmanship, which the lady kept for high days and holy days; and which my presence in her domicile had, as yet, failed to bring forth. Now in came cook, who was Mrs. Bloom's maid-of-all-work, bearing a large watermelon in her arms. This, the milliner quickly severed, and laid it temptingly across the highly-prized waiter. She asked Stuart and then me, to take a slice, which we respectfully declined. Cook then proceeded with it up stairs.

"Since you decline partaking of this melon, we will discuss another;" and the queen-milliner graciously offered us

bits of an exquisite melon, and with her own fair hands, filled my plate with choice pieces. She talked so kindly and sweetly the while, that I was enraptured. Once she called me her "dear Miss Nancy," and I dropped my knife in absolute alarm. Stuart, was "my dear Roland." A millennium was surely dawning upon the millinery. She even became confidential, and informed us, that a large party was soon to be given at Grantland. Miss Grant had French cooks, and decorations, from the city, and as soon as her costly wines and confectioneries arrived, the cards were to be issued. She then proceeded to inform us—the listening twain—that the Misses Gay, Mr. Grant, and the other young gentleman, had asked repeatedly for Rosa, or she would not have sent for her, knowing she was with Stuart. Really, when Mrs. Bloom chose, she could throw an earnestness and simplicity over her very artificial manner, which was highly attractive. She could win any heart, with the least exertion; but she could also repulse, with a severity I never saw equalled. At one moment she was sweet, at another sour. Sometimes she was genial and pleasant, but oftener tart and crisp. Variable, powerful, sensible, and arbitrary, one never knew how to meet her. One could never form the remotest idea of the humour which might possess her, or to which point of the compass she would suddenly veer. Therefore, she held people uneasy, and with all her talent, beauty, and wit, this lady commanded much more fear, than love and respect.

Mrs. Bloom might have manœuvred until the crack of doom, so far as Stuart was concerned, and never encounter a snare laid by him. He sat dignified and easy, and listened to her pleasant chitchat, with a smile; nor did he care one iota for her petulance, and whims, and contrivances, except when Rosa suffered by them. He was above coping with her subtleties; as far removed from her sphere of action, as the eagle, in the majesty of his strength, is from Madam Spider, with her meshes. Mrs. Bloom and Stuart seldom had those little "blow-ups," for which that lady was remarkable. They were too unlike each other ever to clash. Cook returned, and said the fashionables were about to leave; and Mrs. Bloom went above to receive their adieus.

As soon as Rosa was released from further attendance, she came again to us. Her colour was bright, and her eyes sparkled. She had been listening to the well-turned compliments of the city gentlemen. Stuart arose to leave, but Mrs. Bloom laid violent hands upon him.

"Indeed he *must* stay," she said, for it was her birthday, and surely he would not refuse. Again, I was astonished at the new face the lady wore, and I thought miracles would never cease. This was the third day of July. The sun shone powerfully upon the parched earth. It was a brazen, intensely hot day, not a cloud to break the fierce glare of the midsummer's sun. But our parlour in the shaded cottage was cool; our ices were delicious, and the soft air came

lazily in, and fanned us with a gentle breeze. We were a happy party, and I could but observe how the good or ill humour of one single member of a family will affect the whole domestic circle. Mrs. Bloom still wore her irresistible smile, and I prayed fervently that it might ever illumine her fair face.

On this never-to-be-forgotten day, Mrs. Bloom wore a simple purple muslin dress. Her glossy raven hair was braided beneath a jaunty demi-cap. Her black velvet belt, cuffs, and neck-tie, finished off a costume cool, matronly, becoming, and graceful. Stuart, in a full suit of gray linen, was, as usual, comfortable, ready to entertain and to be entertained; and as unsuspicious of spring-guns and man-traps as was possible for mortal man of business to be. He enjoyed the cool air at sultry noon—the rippling of the muslin curtain just over his head—the presence of his “rosebud,” as he delighted to call the gentle being who presided over his destiny—the pleasant running conversation of the widow, in her blandness—and the *outré* remarks of the quaint little woman whom he had befriended for his mother’s sake. He loved the repose and peaceful hush of the little old parlour on the quiet street, the voices of women lulling his wearied ear,—and my hero, like all heroes, loved the *dolce far niente*, and his own individual ease and comfort.

“My dear Roland,” said the widow, swaying gently in her rocking-chair, “I am paying shockingly high rent to

your friend, Mr. Hepburn, for this little, old-fashioned house. I pay three hundred dollars, which is exorbitant, considering it is on a back street—out of the way—and as old as my great-grandfather. Now, Mr. Grant offers me one of his elegant new buildings on Grant Row for the same, which, were I wise, I would accept.”

“That is very little for one of those buildings,” said Stuart. “I understood from the gentleman that he would not let them for less than six hundred dollars.”

“You must know, my dear Roland, that Miss Grant made this proposition to me with the consent of her brother. Mr. Grant rents me the house for seventy-five, and Miss Grant’s work amounts to the remainder. Now, as I cannot pay Mr. Hepburn in work, I think seriously of accepting the offer.”

“I suppose,” said Stuart, laughing, “that fair juvenile’s fancy-work amounts to three hundred dollars per annum.”

“I suppose so,” said Mrs. Bloom; “at least, it must be so, if the price is, as you say, six hundred dollars. Great ladies spend a great deal, you know.”

“But,” continued the young man, “how she can support such a weight of frippery upon her thin form, is to me unaccountable. I think, the other morning, I counted no less than twenty pendants of various shapes and sizes, dangling about her in every direction, as she minced down the street. No Vishnu was ever more completely overloaded with ornaments.”

"Whenever she approaches me," I remarked, "I instinctively commence counting upon my fingers the probable cost of all her trinkets, and from my estimate, she must be indeed a most precious and valuable woman."

"I am happy to hear," said our queen, rubbing her white hands, mildly, "that you, Miss Nancy, have bestowed so much more attention upon her than she has taken the trouble to bestow upon you."

I smiled a ghastly smile. Mrs. Bloom, with a suavity of manner which was really cruel, had coolly cut her woman in pieces. Cook's *favorite de cuisine* announced dinner with a grin, and our snug family party followed its great leader into the dining-room. Mrs. Bloom's birthday dinner was a beautiful little affair. She gave us first gumbo, then fowls and vegetables, and then a round of nicknacks, light and seasonable. An old Virginia squirrel stew was placed before me, and while inhaling its savoury odour, I declared there was no dish in the world to equal it.

"You see your favourite dish, Roland," said the widow, recommending the stew to her honoured guest.

"Capital!" he exclaimed. "My dear Mrs. Bloom, nobody can get up this dish like yourself."

"Poor Major Bloom," said the widow, "used so much to love these stews, and nobody could season them to his taste but his wife."

"Ah, Rosa, do take lessons in making these stews,"

said Stuart; "when I come back I shall catechise you on the subject. I shall ask how much butter, sugar, vinegar, pepper, salt, light bread, and how many tomatoes, to every squirrel—and shall expect ready answers."

Rosa blushed, and a cloud flitted across the mother's face.

"But how long will you be absent upon this strange, mysterious journey?" Mrs. Bloom inquired.

"I cannot tell, or form any idea how long it will be necessary for me to be away."

"But you can at least say whether you will be absent months or years," urged the lady.

"If I have good luck, a few months; if not, a year, or more, perhaps."

At these words Rosa turned deadly pale. She struggled against her feelings for a few minutes, and then, before anybody dreamed of such a thing, she fell back and fainted in her chair. Stuart was quickly by her.

"Why, Rosa, my dear girl, I thought you told me you were so brave."

"Rosa! Rosa!" said I, bustling up, and holding the vinegar cruet to her nose.

"For shame, my daughter!" cried the widow, pushing me away, waving Stuart off, and pouring a glass of ice-water on her head. This, with the violent grasp of the arm with which Mrs. Bloom favoured her unconscious

child, restored her, and, leaning on her mother's arm, she left the room.

Mrs. Bloom soon returned, and Stuart said he was afraid Rosa was not well. Perhaps she sat up too late at night, or overtaxed her strength in working.

Mrs. Bloom said her daughter had not been well since she was out in that storm; whereupon Stuart bit his lip, and grew very thoughtful.

Thus ended the day which had opened so auspiciously. Mrs. Bloom, having gained all the information she desired, allowed Stuart to depart. A smile on Mrs. Bloom's countenance seldom foreboded any good. After tea she seemed to be in the sulks, and I retired early.

The next morning Rosa appeared as usual. She took her music-lesson placidly and listlessly. She was all attention and submission. No outbursts of inspiration,—no impetuous, wilful chords. I stamped and counted away in my long-established monotonous drone, and had no cause to complain of my subdued and gentle pupil. In the afternoon Stuart came in, but one of the sewing-girls reported that Miss Bloom was engaged. Mr. and Miss Grant were above, selecting caps and gewgaws, and talking nonsense. Stuart frowned, took up a book, and attempted to read, but could not. Before his eyes stood the dazzling Grant carriage, the grim coachman, and pert footman. We sat in silence—the lover and I. The little parlour, but yesterday so cool and inviting, had lost its

charm, and now looked cheerless and gloomy. Stuart tossed the book from his hands, and paced the room. Restlessly he was walking up and down, when a fine panorama opened upon us from the stairway. Down came Mrs. Bloom and Miss Grant arm-in-arm, in close chat. The widow all that was delightful, Pocahontas theatrically delighted.

"Oh, it is such an honour, my dear Miss Grant, to have yourself and brother call this afternoon," said the queen-milliner, pressing her hand.

"Not at all—pray do not mention it," said the Indian-named, making a little feint of alarm at the bare idea.

These turtle-doves, billing and cooing as they passed, were followed by Grant, like a huge elephant, getting down the steps one by one, and making a dead halt now and then, to blow. This gentleman evidently flattered himself that he was assisting Rosa, he having hold of her by the tip of her elbow; but this was only an innocent delusion. His mind and body were concentrated in securing a footing and easy descent for himself. Step by step, Rosa and her nimble escort proceeded on their winding way. At this highly pleasing spectacle, Stuart knitted his brows and stamped his boot-heel. Mr. Grant's gray eyes leered triumphantly. I had a distant glimpse of this Hegira or flight of Mr. Grant's down the staircase, between which and cook's boy my attention was divided. This youngster, who was generally in the dining-room when anything was

to be seen, was now stationed in the back piazza, with his elbows upon the window, and through the dining-room door, which was opened, he witnessed the slowly-moving caravan. His first salutation on glimpsing Mr. Grant was, "Hooray! Go it Pewter!" by which name, I am sorry to say, Mr. Grant was very generally known. And then the following running remarks fell from "that boy," as cook called him, in this manner.

"Now, you *is* got action, ole un. Whew! puff away. I knowed steam was in dat biler fuss. Hooray! down one step as I'm a Dutchman! Now, for another lift. Well done, agility—stop and blow—all ready—now for it—down another! Sich a gittin' down stairs I never did see! Easy—easy—steady—hooray! Let me know, Missis, just one day before he teches bottom," said he, hurriedly apostrophizing me, and diving in alarm. Cook, thinking he was transgressing the "civil bounds," to use her own expression, collared him, and, by a sudden swing, restored him to his proper sphere. But cook's amateur wring, which had been death to many a chicken, only suspended this young man's breath for a moment.

"Now, mum," said Shackleford, bowing politely to her, "don't take all the breath out'en my body, if it's all the same to you, mum. Another sich, jerk, mum, would land me, mum, exactly whar all de good niggers go."

But, in spite of the spirited youth's volubility, he had

slily to mop his eyes with the cuff of his jacket, and when I last saw him, he was being dragged by cook into the kitchen, and dodging, with great judgment and discrimination, when he saw her fist doubled.

When Mr. Grant reached his last landing-place, he looked around with some show of vivacity. Stuart met Rosa, and inquired very tenderly after her health; at which Mr. Grant's eyes assumed the appearance of two luminous pewter plates. Not finding words sufficient to rebuke so cool a piece of offrontery, he betook himself to his staunch friend, Mrs. Bloom. This lady was still standing in the hall, bandying compliments with the arch Pocahontas. At parting, the millionaire, with a queer grimace, said to the object of his adoration:

"Hem—if I too may be allowed a liberty, which, taking all things into consideration, is justly my due, I would venture to say—to hope—to—to request, that Miss Bloom will always wear her handsome hair arranged thus."

"Your wish is a command, my dear sir," said the widow, quickly.

"Hem!" continued Grant, "will Miss Bloom allow me to call again?"

"Our shop is open to all, sir," said Rosa, mildly, determined to answer for herself this time.

"May I hope that Miss Bloom will soon repeat her delightful morning calls?" said the huge mass of flesh, still

lingering, while Pocahontas, her patience exhausted, walked alone to the carriage. "I kiss your fair hand, Miss. Pray allow me the honour."

Poor Stuart was in purgatory. Mr. Grant, knowing he had the widow to back him, surely thought his hour was come. Not dreaming of a refusal, he was about to take some preparatory measures towards kissing the fair hand to which he aspired, such as stowing away his pocket-handkerchief, drawing off his gloves, laying aside his hat, and making away with everything which might incommode him in the performance of that feat, when Rosa turned brusquely away, and said she had not the power to grant any such request, plainly insinuating that her fair hand did not belong altogether to herself. Now a storm was brewing, I was sure. Mrs. Bloom's frown gathered ominously. Grant's visage turned all the colours of the rainbow, and finally settled into its original purple hue.

"Allow me to bid you good evening, Miss," he said, turning on his heel.

"Certainly, sir," said Rosa, fearless and undaunted to the last.

"Bravo!" thought I, "she's a chip of the old block. Bravo! Stuart's star is in the ascendant. Bravo!"

The grandees were gone. Mrs. Bloom stroked her sleek cheek; and, smothering her anger, commenced, in a low moan, a stereotyped wail on the miseries of poverty.

"Oh! had I but a carriage to take an airing such an afternoon as this, methinks it would prolong my days. But here I must work from morning until night, go weary to bed, and rise unrefreshed. I toil, toil, toil, and accomplish nothing. I see my daughter, whose birth was hailed as an heiress, living like a beggar. When I was young and vigorous, I reclined in the lap of luxury; now, old age is creeping upon me, my comforts diminish day by day. I must bend over my task to-day, though to-morrow bring no hope of release. I must work for to-day, though old age will find me penniless."

"Mamma, see our pleasant home! Surely we have comforts enough here. To-morrow may bring us more," said Rosa, cheerfully.

"You are young, my child. Hope once gilded my future as it now does yours. But alas! I have lived to lift the veil! 'Tis hard to see you cast out from the sphere you were made to adorn. Instead of seeing you radiant with jewels, I see you—"

"Radiant with health and happiness, mamma!" cried the girl, throwing her arms around her mother's neck, and trying in vain to impart the kindly glow of her warm heart to the bosom of her dissatisfied parent.

Stuart's eyes rested proudly on her he loved. He caught with joy the warm impulses which glowed upon her face. He bounded, with lover-like rapidity, over the years

which must intervene, and saw her as his own, all pure and fresh, impulsive and beautiful. But the sealed future had yet its revealings for these two hearts, as it has for us all; therefore he who is confident of the present, is but as the somnambulist, walking, with closed eyes, upon the brink of the precipice.

CHAPTER V.

THE GRANT FETE.

"A something light as air, a look,
A word unkind, or wrongly taken;
Oh! love that tempest never shook,
A breath, a touch, like this has shaken."

MOORE.

THE clear, azure sky, and the rose-coloured east, announced another day. The sportive clouds gambolled beneath the sun's sparkling eye. The verdant carpet glistened with its diamonds. The air came to us scented with health and blossoms, and Mrs. Washington Bloom entered the millinery in triumph.

"See! see!" she cried, distributing among us some cards, which informed us that the descendant of a line of Indian kings would be at home on such a day, and would be happy to see us.

Poor Rosa, fagged, and worn out, and heartily tired of this eternal Grant, Grant, Grant, raised her humid eyes, and said,

"Dear mamma, what *can* they want with an humble bonnet-maker in their gorgeous rooms?"

"To adorn them, my dear, of course," replied the mother, facetiously, for she was in a fine humour, and disposed to be complimentary.

"And what can they want with me?" I inquired, turning my *billet du bal* dubiously.

"Why, why," replied the widow, put to her trumps, "as a foil to Pocahontas, perhaps."

At this jest the lady laughed; but Rosa protested so earnestly against any such intention on the part of the Grants, that I pocketed my card and my insult, and said I was very glad that the grandees had at last consented to connive at my existence.

Mrs. Bloom now opened a jewellery box, from whose velvet niches she drew forth some superb ornaments.

"Mamma! mamma! what are those, mamma? Surely you do not bring *me* diamonds?"

"Yes, they are genuine diamonds," said I, taking up the bracelets, while Mrs. Bloom, without saying a word, threw a glittering spray over her daughter's glossy hair.

"You call them genuine, Miss Nancy, which shows very plainly how much *you* know about diamonds. I say they are not real diamonds, but only the knowing ones can tell that. I bought them at Wilson's, at Miss Grant's suggestion. They are cheap South Americans, with now and then, a flaw. Ho! for the brilliants, say I. Rosa, you

were made to wear jewels, my dear;" and at every pause Mrs. Bloom scattered the jewels over her daughter. "Such hair should be woven with diamonds. These arms and hands should shine with the golden-bound lights."

"Mamma," said the passive girl, "I know how these jewels were bought."

Mrs. Bloom changed colour, and said:

"They were bought with a little money, child, which, by hook and by crook, I have managed to save for you. And this is the way you thank me, Rosa!"

"They were bought with a great deal of money, mamma,—more than we can scrape together in a lifetime. Take them away—take them away! I fear I suspect the truth."

"Methinks a young girl must be very timid, and very fearful, and very suspicious, and very dutiful, who can gravely charge her own mother with a falsehood. Once for all, hear me!" cried the widow, in a terrific voice: "you, Rosa Bloom, and you, also, ever-at-hand always-in-the-way, Nancy Joyner! You both know *me*; and if there be one master virtue in me, it is determination,—yes, an indomitable determination to carry my point at all risks, and at all lengths. Neither tears, nor threats, nor suspicions, nor barriers, nor life, nor death, nor man, nor woman, can stop me! I go!—I never yet have failed,—and do not flatter yourselves that I shall fail now. You both see the goal towards which I move—make way for me—lend me a hand—or I stride over you!

Do not stand amazed at *me*—do not try to bar *my* path. I have the nerve, the will, the power, the peculiar requisite talent, the ambition, the ready means,—and I go! Stop me if you can!—hinder me if you dare! Go to your room, Rosa; put away your jewels. They were purchased at the price I chose to give for them. And remember—nobody shall question *me*! Good morning, Miss Joyner. You can sit and shake your foot, and ruminate according to your interesting fashion, so long as you, in the plenitude of your wisdom, may think proper.”

“Good Lord, deliver us!” I ejaculated, and immediately commenced shaking my foot, and ruminating to this effect.

Methought it must be Mrs. Bloom’s desire to get rid of me, for the better advancement of her plans, and hence her delightful treatment of me. Very well, thought I,—I shall stay and provoke her as long as I can. Secondly, I ruminated to this effect,—that money was indeed the root of all evil; that the way leading to it is, most frequently, a winding, twisting, underhanded, subterranean way; and that Mrs. Bloom had bowed her lofty head, and entered that devious track. And I more than suspected that Grant had bought the diamonds, and given them to Mrs. Bloom as his first payment for her daughter, and that Grant, with his enormous funds, had concluded to buy the beautiful slave, whom her mother had evidently put up to the highest bidder. Yes, my heroine, my beautiful, gifted heroine, was but a slave, led passively up and down the

plaza, that the purse-proud aristocrats might see her and be tempted to buy.

But my thoughts were as snails and terrapins to the lightning speed of the dumpling negro lass, who careered between the millinery and Grantland, and vice versa. That young ebon creature seemed in an eager, excited, overheated chase for three whole days. And so overcharged was she, generally, with messages from Mrs. Bloom to her mistress, and from that lady back again to Mrs. Bloom, that she was kept constantly in a muddled state. I had frequently the unexpected pleasure of being jostled and overturned by her in narrow aisles and passages, where a collision was inevitable to the damagement of one of us. Most generally, she was to be encountered at angles, when she would come plump upon a person in the most dangerous and alarming manner. Sometimes she would favour me with a long string of messages, taking me, in her bewilderment, for Mrs. Bloom, and then again, she would rush from me in a perfect frenzy, and take down another way at a headlong and buffalonian rate. Cook’s boy was, as usual, on the alert. “That boy,” as I have before remarked, having a very keen scent for game of any kind, poor Dicy offered him an inexhaustible fund of amusement and profit, for the business of that boy’s life was to collect all the fun he could from every point of the compass, and from every available source. Of course, he had nothing to do but interpose his foot when Dicy would

come upon him in her breathless haste. Of course she had no time to be looking out for breakers, and therefore was always precipitated upon her hands, and short nose, and knocked out of all knowledge of the bundles of messages entrusted to her care and keeping. And while she would pick herself up, and dart back to gather them anew, cook's boy would prepare for another tripping. Once she stumbled into a large tub of water which stood right in her path. Again she fell from the top of the stair to the bottom, owing to some slight contrivance above, invented by that remarkable boy. In such innocent occupations and pursuits, "that boy"—who cook often remarked was on the road to the gallows—employed the golden moments vouchsafed to him by the hurly-burly attendant upon the great Grant fête.

The flutter and tumult of Mrs. Bloom's mighty preparations gradually subsided as the all-important moment drew nigh, and the dumpling lass, battered, and bruised, and in a most dilapidated condition, was at last at rest.

When Stuart, after a busy day, came to take his promised bride to the party, Mrs. Bloom, with much pomp and circumstance, led from her dressing-room a young lady, clad in sumptuous apparel, of queenly mien, and dazzling beauty. With a proud, beaming eye, she bade him behold the belle of the evening. The young man drew back. He was not prepared for this. He silently scanned this dazzling apparition, from the superb head, to the dainty satin

foot. He exclaimed, "Magnificent!" He looked again upon the dazzling beauty, glowing with a new and grander light. He sighed, and turning to the infatuated mother, said, "My dear Madam, while all must acknowledge the superiority of Rosa's charms, and that they are even enhanced by these means, I ask you, do you think that a proper dress for her to appear in to-night? Do you not think she had better don her simple milliner's dress, and go as becomes one of her calling? Had she not better, by that modest grace and sweet simplicity which are ever hers, please the wise and good, than by this brilliant glare to draw around her those moths of fashion who are ever fluttering around the newest light? For my own part, I have no right, neither do I desire to interfere with any style of dress my Rosa may choose to adopt, but she will be more admired as Rosa, the bonnet-maker, than as she now appears."

"You fear rivals!" cried Mrs. Bloom. "You Turk, you—I suppose you would have me veil my daughter, sir, that nobody might see her but yourself! Or is her beauty too grand, too imposing for Mr. Hepburn's agent? Ho! jealousy, thou hideous, green-eyed monster! How camest thou to obtain a footing in the noble heart of Mr. Roland Stuart!"

"Very well," said Stuart, "I have nothing more to say. You may scatter jewels over her until she cannot bear their

weight, and if Rosa prefers them—which from her silence I should say she does—”

“You judge me severely,” cried the girl, her flashing eye putting the paltry diamonds to shame. “I go to-night, decked out I know not how—laden with jewels that came from I know not where. All I know is, that I feel sad, and dispirited, and careless about everything, and that a weight is pressing on my heart. Ah! this I know too well.”

“Hold!” cried the mother. “My child, you must not go thus. Where, Rosa, is your vivacity—your buoyancy—your youth? Did you not promise to yield yourself up to my better judgment, to-night? Will you do nothing for me cheerfully, Rosa? I do not want to drag you to this party, feeling sad and dispirited; though Stuart, with his eternally lugubrious visage, and mournful lamentations, is enough to dishearten the stoutest. We have half an hour to spare. Cook, bring in the coffee, and toast, and a little of my old wine? Let us refresh ourselves;—and, for gracious’ sake, let us try and be merry. We do not often get to a party, that we need set up lamentations and dirges over them. And, as to the matter of that, I am sure Mr. Stuart has dressed out in *his* best. Oh ho, sir! I think I see a gold chain, and some new studs, and a most exquisite vest, and, upon my word, a *chapeau bras*! Now, we are commanded first to cast out the beam,—eh, Stuart? Your good health, sir.”

Good humour was restored; and even Rosa began to feel almost comfortable. Mrs. Bloom, full of conversation and jests, filled her daughter’s glass, and said it was her father’s wine; and filled mine, and said,

“And Miss Nancy, too, upon my word, comes out most brilliantly to-night! Methinks, I am not the only one who likes to put the best foot forward!” and in a careless manner, the ambitious mother plied her daughter with the potent nectar, that she might sip new beauty from the drugged cup.

“Now,” said the mother, “the loftiest head in these gorgeous rooms shall be *my* daughter’s, the brightest eye hers; while the most touch-me-not of all exquisites shall be that highly moral and most practical preacher, Mr. Roland Stuart. Ha! ha!” and she laughingly led the way to Mr. Grant’s carriage, which was in waiting.

A few minutes’ drive brought us beneath the streaming lights, and bustle, and din, of the great world at Grantland. Mr. and Miss Grant received us at the door. They had been waiting for us, they said. Pocahontas took the widow’s hand, who grasped mine. We were led into a large room surrounded by mirrors. Here fair ladies were unveiling themselves, replacing disarranged ringlets, and bringing all their artillery to bear upon the beaux, whose voices came in swelling murmurs from the distant rooms.

“Where is Rosa?” asked Mrs. Bloom, looking around.

"My brother took charge of her. Surely they are not *en route* for Carolina!" said Pocahontas, laughing.

At this remark, from the lady of the house, many high-bred ladies looked at Mrs. Bloom, who, in her turn, looked scornfully at the high-bred ladies. I heard many inquire, "Pray, who is she?" but Mrs. Bloom looked so scornful and reserved, that they concluded she must be "somebody." These conclusions were confirmed, when Pocahontas' city friends were seen conversing deferentially with this exceedingly scornful and high-bred lady. Still, no stately presentations were solicited; and Mrs. Bloom had only one friend to whom to look, and that was Pocahontas. A pair of folding-doors opened, and Rosa, flushed and sparkling, her red lip curling, and her hands trembling, came in.

Miss Pocahontas minced up to her, and asked her if she would re-arrange her curls, which were *en masse*. The girl raised her startling eye, and with an imperious gesture, waived all further attention from the lady of the house. She had no need of Miss Grant's gilded mirrors. She scorned to cast one glance upon a form, whose beauty had but ministered to her misery. She tossed her sweeping tresses back, and her mother who had spent hours over those shining coils, saw how useless and tasteless all art was here.

The ambitious mother saw, with pleasure, the change which had come over her child. She marked the large eyes

roving restlessly in their simple chambers, the cheek wearing a hue dazzlingly bright, the fair rounded shoulders, and exquisite bust, rise and swell, thanks to her drugged wine—her brilliant, beautifying, spirit-raising wine.

"Where have you been, my daughter?" asked Mrs. Bloom; for she was anxious that the grandees should know that superb creature was her daughter. Her daughter—whom she only loved as a means to attain her end. Her daughter—whose beauty she had almost sold. Her daughter, magnificently beautiful—but, had she been diseased and deformed, Mrs. Bloom would scarcely have owned her here.

"Where have you been, my daughter?" inquired the mother, so vain of the exterior of her suffering child.

"Mr. Grant lost his way, and took me to the library, through mistake," said Rosa, curling her lip. Mrs. Bloom coloured. Miss Grant hastened to conduct her friends into the rooms opened for their reception.

As Rosa followed on, Mr. Grant met her, and, stooping to her ear, asked forgiveness. He familiarly drew her arm within his own, and led her away.

A vista of rooms, filled with lights and pleasure scenes, unbalanced me. Quadrilles were being formed in one room, card parties in another, and flirtations and small talk seemed to be going on in a third. Soon the polka dancers commenced their entries, and several couples seemed in a state of partial delirium, if one might judge

from their gestures. A fashionable band sawed, and scraped, and now and then blew out such unexpected salutes, that, fearing my weak nerves might suffer, I endeavoured to escape. Before I could elbow my way through the crowd, a tremendous flourish, and then a significant pause, as though to lull me into a fatal security, warned me to depart, at the peril of every nerve in my body. I halted not in this room, or in that, but went on, and on, until I felt at a safe distance. I found myself in a large lusted room. A piano, harp, and guitar were here; and, mingled in graceful confusion, were portfolios, drawings, books, bijouterie, and ornaments of vertu.

Dizzy and unsettled,—for be it remembered Mrs. Bloom's woman was unaccustomed to such grand receptions as this affair at Grantland,—I passed on. A soft, plaintive, Eolian-like music came stealing in my ear. I was in the most remote room. A subdued mysterious light revealed numerous tête-à-têtes—lounges—ottomans—a guitar, with long blue ribbons—and many cosy, snug recesses, filled with moonlight and flowers, and odorous with the sweetest perfumes. This apartment opened by beautiful glass doors into a long portico. Here, disposed among oleanders and jasmine, were tables of wines and ices of every variety. This room was evidently got up for romance and sentiment. In these moonlight niches, fair damsels were resting from the dance,—and lovers were whispering low,—and, deep in an odorous embrasure, I saw the angel girl,—the

lovely daughter of my hostess,—leaning pensively on her hand, while Mr. Grant poured into her unwilling ear his flattery or his love. I saw him take her hand, which she drew hastily away. I saw him bending over her, as though imploring and beseeching. I saw her lay her cheek upon her hand, and, pushing back her long hair from her clear open brow, look up, and speak most gently, but, from her depthless eye, most eloquently, to him. I saw her cheek glow, and her eye flash, as she spoke. He bent over her again, and then I saw her blush intensely, and turn away. He grasped her hand, and spoke to her again,—and she smiled, and turned to him, and he looked very happy. And then, they seemed to talk less earnestly, for a few moments,—then the blushes came to her cheek again, and she turned away towards the window. I saw him draw very near to her, and, laying his huge hand upon her satin shoulder, he spoke long, and low, and earnestly, while her head was bent upon her hand, and her cheek glowing through her curls. I left this mysterious moonlighted room, convinced that Mr. Grant was suing ardently, perhaps not in vain. I was met by Mrs. Bloom, who doubtless had her eye upon the charmed room.

“Why, bless me! where are your gallants, Miss Nancy? Fie, fie, you made no conquests to-night! Upon my word, that is too bad.”

This facetious lady, as usual, nettled me, and I replied,

"My gallants are doubtless making merry with yours, Madam, wherever that may be."

"I see the society of the 'upper ten' has abated none of your severity. I had hoped that a milder—But never mind my hopes, since they are not likely to be realized."

"Perhaps you have not taken the same pains to realize those hopes, which you have to consummate some others, I could mention."

"Mysterious, too! ha! ha! ha! Oh, worse and worse! For pity's sake do not favour me with any crusty enigmas to solve. Dear me! I am only floating on the surface of occasion—I am not elucidating, and fathoming, and have met with no propounder of wisdom here, save my little lady of the old field school."

Mrs. Bloom turned, and joined the circle around Pocahontas. Now came Stuart to me pale and agitated.

"Where is Rosa?" he inquired, leading me to a retired seat, and sitting down beside me. "I have not seen my girl at all." He passed his hand across his brow. "Strange thoughts haunt me—where—where is my gentle Rosa?"

"My dear fellow," said I, "she is with Mr. Grant; but do not be alarmed. She sits in a cosy recess bathed in moonlight, beautiful and bright; while Mr. Grant, with his hand upon her satin shoulder, talks about his love."

"Ha! if this be so, I forsake her. If she can devote the precious moments which should be mine to him, I go, nor will I ever see her more. I will give her up to him.

I want no divided heart, torn by love and duty thus. If she is not mine, and only mine, I yield her up for ever. The sooner it were done, the better, Miss Nancy; I feel that I have the strength to give my Rosa up for ever."

"Surely you will not," said I; "you know her good, true heart, her woman's faith, her heroic endurance—you cannot, surely."

"I once knew her," he whispered, tremulously, "as my young heart's perfect, hallowed ideal; as a gentle, loving girl, whose deep feelings only revealed themselves to him she loved. And when she gave up the wondrous treasures of her earnest heart to me—only to me—I idolized her. I was a very monarch in my pride—I exulted in my conquest—I was a new man, walking with uplifted brow, upon a new earth. Oh! I have known her beautiful and true. Coy as a young fawn on his native hill, and firm as the mountain's base. I have known her in poverty and in persecution. I have known her tested, as never woman in her frailty was tried; and never, until now, have her right feelings erred. Never, until this fatal night, has the angel of my boyhood's dream, for one moment, gone astray. Weak, yet stronger than I—fragile, yet clinging closer than the vine—tender, yet stern in her woman's duty—gifted, beautiful, magnificently, gorgeously beautiful, yet distrustful of herself, and shrinking from the world. Such was once my Rosa. God only knows, what

demon has dared to dislocate the delicate mechanism which produced these beautiful results."

"But should you not pause, before you act? Perhaps all may yet be well. These perplexities are vexing, I know; but one must sometimes submit to the present, to secure the future."

"Miss Nancy, I am an honourable man. Honourably I woo a girl a little beneath me in what the world calls society, but worthy of a better suitor. I am accepted. The wily mother, with a bland smile, approves the daughter's choice. But no sooner are we engaged, than she commences such a game as never mortal stakes were played for. Mrs. Bloom's plan is to marry Rosa to me, if her other schemes fail. In the mean time, she leaves nothing under heaven undone, to attain her ends. She plots deeply. Pocahontas is in the secret; and Grant, the hideous beast, whose thoughts cannot soar one inch above the earth he burdens, dares to love my Rosa—dares to love that fair creation, whose first, pure, heaven-taught feelings were mine! Oh! I shall go mad! Well, to advance his suit, he pays the mother with his gold. Yes, I swear to you, upon authority I cannot doubt, that Mrs. Bloom has set her price upon that lovely bowed head."

"Impossible!" I exclaimed.

"It is so. They never lived as they live now. This millinery is a mere pretext; and, I understand, is soon to be closed. Grant supports them, dresses Rosa, dressed

her to-night, and settles ten thousand dollars upon Mrs. Bloom the day she is his bride."

"Then what will you do, my poor Stuart? Strive manfully against the current, outwit Mrs. Bloom, defy Grant, and carry off the prize."

"What will I do? There is but one honourable course, and I take it, cost what it may. I shall stoop to no small game of battledoor and shuttlecock with this invincible pseudo-milliner. If the girl, in whom I have placed all trust and confidence, prove untrue, I do not want her. But earth contains no other bride for me. No other woman ever touched my heart, or enrapt my eye. If she, so holy and so pure, can, by any treachery or influence, be made false, I detest the sex for ever. If she, stamped with Heaven's own seal, can be led astray, then I ask who is pure, and who is holy, and who on earth is true? With a heart, upheaving to its very centre, I shall release her from her promise to me. I shall summon the strength to say, 'Rosa, you are free.' And, with her dear image, I cast out from my ruined heart all hope, and all tenderness, and all love. I shall go upon my mission, trusting in my God. Once I could have given her the keys to my heart of hearts without fear. Now, my Rosa is no more the Rosa of my youth. Lo! the vision of my gorgeous morning dream is gone; I cast it from me for ever!"

He shuddered as he tore the image in its shattered beauty, piece by piece, from his bruised heart. No pen

of mine can render the mournful pathos of this scene. I could see, beneath the stern face, the writhing heart. I could see, beneath the man's vaunted strength, his very weakness. I could see him struggling to hide the filmed eye, and to still the quivering lip.

The band played furiously. Every instrument seemed on the stretch. After a great display of science and artistic execution, the bravura lulled. A voluptuous waltz arose, light-winged and bounding in its dying strains. Soft, flute-like instruments united in breathing forth a floating, linked, wreathing air. Now softly tripping as it fell, now complaining like the sweet south, wreathing through a summer vine, now sighing on a mournful minor key, then, as though forgetting all sorrow, the air grew gay and aerial, and bounded lightly on the ear, and seemed a very sprite in its frolicsome, witching, circling, soaring, floating, tripping melody. Stuart took my hand, and drew nearer, to catch into his troubled heart some of the lightsome glee of this glad, bounding music, as it twirled and twisted in its fairy-like vivacity.

But what met our eyes!

Rosa, her yielding waist clasped by a fierce-moustached fellow, whirling on the seductive notes, graceful and undulating as the magic cadences, whose gentle time her dainty foot touched lightly. Breath was suspended as the light figures bounded around and around, and glided and whirled again, and seemed to revel in the spirit-notes of this elf-

like melody. Away they sped—the fierce fellow, and the bright, illusive vision of Stuart's gorgeous dream.

"The drugged wine! the drugged wine!" I thought, "has done its work!"

The waltz was over. Mr. Grant, ever ready, took the beauty on his arm. He led her to a conspicuous seat, and fanned her with an oriental fan. Poor Stuart was livid, while his eyes were fixed upon the vision in her glittering beauty. The city beaux pressed around her, and her circle was but a dense mass of admirers. Other ladies, former belles, were neglected. The sensation was immense. Mr. Grant touched Mrs. Bloom's arm, and said, with a smile of pleasure,

"How our pet takes! I told you she had but to appear in a suitable manner, and there would be a furore, a perfect rush of admiration. Our fellows are dazzled. We have nothing like her, Madam; did I not tell you so?"

"You are always right, my dear sir, always," said the happy mother, displaying her white teeth with much satisfaction.

"Lost! lost!" muttered Stuart.

I looked around me. He was gone—gone with the iron in his soul. I next found myself very near Miss Pocahontas, who was busily engaged in replying to sundry tough questions, propounded by a company of guardian ladies, whose upturned noses proclaimed their high standing. Miss Grant being, like her brother, somewhat

addicted to stammering when pushed too far, was assisted in the defence by the Misses Gay. These ladies invariably came to the rescue whenever their friend gave the well-known signal of discomfiture.

"Well," said Pocahontas, drawing a long breath, "we all know they are of first-rate family."

"Bloom, Bloom!" said a keen old lady, "Bloom—why that is but an ordinary name."

"But what is there in a name?" cried the descendant of the great war-chief, dropping one argument with the greatest facility, to battle for another.

"A great deal—I may say everything," replied the keen one.

"Then, you and I think very differently," replied this hoyden of forty, who was the first one to set up Mrs. Bloom's claims, and the first one to knock them down.

"At all events, she has been to Paris," cried the royal-blooded dame, thinking she had conjured a poser this time.

"For millinery?" inquired the other.

Pocahontas' features drooped; but her auxiliary was at hand.

"I would not sneer at poverty," said Miss Gay, "unless wealth were my only claim to distinction. Persons like Mrs. Bloom, can earn an honest livelihood and still be *comme il faut*. Ladies of her mind and person, cannot depreciate under any circumstances."

"They should certainly dress well, since their lives are

devoted to dressing other people," continued this dissatisfied Cerberus of upper-tendom.

"It is not everybody that dress will become," said Miss Gay, looking full at her antagonist. "You cannot deny but that Miss Bloom is the belle of the evening."

"She has a crowd of gentlemen around her, I see. But gentlemen are no respecters of persons. If we did not guard the boundaries of good society, they would create a precious medley, indeed. Beauty is all in all with them."

"While ladies, *some* ladies, detest beauty in all its forms," said Miss Gay, pointedly.

"Only look!" cried a lady on my left; "Mr. Grant is kneeling to the bonnet-maker, as I live!"

"He should have a couple of able-bodied servants now, to assist him to rise," remarked a spiteful creature in pink.

"Well, he is up. I can breathe freely once more," said another of this group.

It soon appeared that Grant was resorting to many novel expedients to get Rosa's consent to promenade with him. He could not waltz—he could not polk—he hadn't even breath enough to last him through a quadrille; but he assured her, upon his honour, he could walk famously up and down the octagonal saloon.

"Ah! that will never do!" interposed Rosa's waltzing partner.

"Grant, upon my word, you are too selfish, man."

"Why, my dear fellow," lisped a pale, intellectual fop, who had been intently regarding Rosa's drooping lashes for the last fifteen minutes, "would you steal away the sun? Around what luminary then, would we, the lesser lights, revolve? Would you turn us out, like accursed comets, out into the realms of space?"

"Yes," said Grant, "I would create a revolution, indeed. I would banish you every one from these celestial regions. I would put out the light, and then put out the light."

"A perfect Othello; eh! Grant? Bent on the destruction of our dazzling luminary. What do you think of such murderous intentions, Miss Bloom?"

I could not hear the girl's reply; but never laughed she so vacantly, and never shot such strange fire from her eye.

One by one, the elderly ladies disappeared from Miss Grant's brilliant rooms. Then, those interesting and highly amused creatures, called, *par excellence*, wall-flowers, with languid eyes and dreamy lids, withdrew. Finally, the belles and their delighted chaperones, took their leave; and thus closed, with great *éclat*, the great Grant festival. Rosa was conducted to the cloak-room by the privileged Mr. Grant. After many compliments, he carefully shawled her, and reluctantly led her out.

"But where is your *preux* chevalier, Miss Bloom? Surely, he has not resigned to *me* the honour of seeing you home?"

Rosa's eye fell. The truth was coming upon her. Her lover's proud heart was wounded. As we entered the hall, Stuart, graceful and bland, his white kids as pure as snow, ascended the front steps.

"You were not at your post, Mr. Stuart," cried Mrs. Bloom. "See, you have put us to the trouble of waiting for you!"

He begged ten thousand pardons; but he confessed to some ungallantry. He had been so remiss as to see Mrs. Green and her young ladies home. He hoped he had not detained Mrs. Bloom very long.

Poor Rosa, from the manner he chose to assume, feared that this *faux pas* was not altogether unintentional. He had taught her that he could be indifferent, too,—that when she slighted him, he could at least repay her. His icy coldness was severe. He led Mrs. Bloom and myself to the carriage; but left Rosa unassisted in Mr. Grant's hands. He conversed pleasantly enough on the way home; but not one word said he to Rosa. He had no compliments for her beauty—no honeyed compliments for the belle of the evening. And she had thrown away his love for these! In endeavouring to please all, she had lost her power over the only one she cared to please. In obeying her mother, she had lost her lover. Anxious to conciliate both, to unite these jarring interests, she had lost all she prized on earth. But proud as Lucifer, she would not, by one smile, endeavour to recall him. She sat listless and cold. She saw him not, she heard him not.

We reached home. Stuart handed Rosa in the house, and then he asked her if she had any commands for him, as he should leave for New Orleans in an hour.

She staggered beneath the heavy blow; but quickly recovering, she said coldly,

"No, sir. Good evening."

And thus they parted. Two hearts literally dying for each other,—two hearts knit by the love of years. Oh! what a spot of work was here! I could have torn my hair up by the roots, and wept and wailed over these two. What on the face of the earth did they mean? Was this love? for pity's sake, I asked myself, *could* this be love? My heart was in my mouth,—my eyeballs luminous as globes of fire! I was shocked at this sudden phase in the tender passion. Mrs. Bloom raised her defiant head. Rosa's was as proudly erect. We retired to our rooms. I paced up and down my chamber like one possessed. Could I do nothing for them? Oh! they must *not* part in this barbarous manner; something must be done by somebody; and so I tapped at Rosa's door.

"Come in," she said, and I saw that her hauteur was gone, poor thing, and the woman's tears were standing in her eyes.

"Rosa, my child, what have you done?" I asked.

"Lost him for ever! for ever!" she cried, covering her face, and weeping violently.

"No, no!" I exclaimed; "one word of kindness will

bring him back. Say you are unhappy, say you love him yet, and with the precious message I will speed me to him, and then all will be well again."

She was silent. I looked at my watch, and said,

"Say quickly, or it will be too late,—the hour is nearly gone."

There was a struggle between love and pride in her heart.

"My best friend," she said, wiping the tears from her eyes, "Stuart cannot doubt *me*. He has known me from my childhood, and trusted me as he would himself;—he cannot doubt *me*. This may be his excuse to free himself from an engagement which must be tiresome to him. If he is offended with my gaiety, I could not help it. He has not sought me the whole evening. Did he wish me to seek him? Situated as I was, I could not be otherwise than polite to Mr. Grant. I had hoped, by an honourable and ladylike course, to make my persecutor my friend. Mr. Grant has been very generous to us, and it did not become me to insult him, or to reject his attentions. Stuart himself can see nothing wrong in this. So far from giving him pain, I had thought how pleased he would be to see me noticed by the great. I am always pleased when he is applauded, and I thought he loved me as I loved him."

"Then you did not intend to wound him, or give him a shadow of pain?" I asked.

"As I hope for life!" she said solemnly.

I heard a distant whistle, and, in a moment of hallucination, I sped away. Up the long street—across the market—up Rail Road Street, and away to the dépôt I ran, with the precious words upon my tongue. As I approached the dark, dismal-looking place alone, over which the dim stars were wandering, my ardour was considerably abated. I found myself cooling out rapidly, but I determined to push on. Just as I came puffing up, my pace slackening at every step, the steam-car's track flashed in the distance.

"Too late! too late!" I cried, raising my hands with a frantic gesture.

"Who goes there?" inquired a sharp voice, and Mr. Hepburn, with a lantern in hand, threw the light upon my agitated face.

"Nancy Joyner," I replied, trembling from head to foot and scarcely knowing what I said.

"And who, in the name of common sense, is Nancy Joyner?"

"The same who accompanied Miss Bloom—"

"And what are you prowling about here, in this distracted state for, Nancy Joyner?"

"My two young friends—" said I panting, for I had run myself completely out of breath.

"Your two young friends—" said Mr. Hepburn, impatiently, "living up at the dépôt, I suppose. Pray go on, when you have recovered your speech."

"You do not understand me, sir. I came to see Stuart. I was bound on a mission of love."

"A wild-goose chase," muttered the gentleman. "Ladies at your age, Miss Nancy Joyner, are generally thought to have arrived at years of discretion. But, I am sorry to say, I find many exceptions to this wholesome rule. People who are so unfortunate as to have no love-scrapes of their own, are eternally thrusting themselves into other people's, and thereby getting no thanks from either party. Match-making is a dangerous business, therefore, heed my words. Go home as quickly as you came, say your prayers, and get to bed."

"Thank you, for your voluntary and sage advice, sir. Perhaps it is well for the world that everybody is not so cold, phlegmatic, and unimpressible as yourself," said I, tartly.

"Not so unimpressible but that, in the dearth of matrimonial speculations, some people might turn their eyes upon me," he replied, laughing.

"I am glad to see you can be complimentary, sir, even though it be only to yourself," said I, as mad with Mr. Hepburn as a hornet.

"Ha! ha! ha! Your tongue is as brisk as your gait, Miss Nancy." He took my arm, and leading me to Mrs. Bloom's gate, shoved me in, and bade me go along with me.

CHAPTER VI.

"This is the very ecstasy of love,
Whose violent property foredoes itself,
And leads the will to desperate undertakings,
As oft as any passion under Heaven
That does afflict our natures."

SHAKESPEARE.

AT our late breakfast, Rosa appeared. No traces of tears were visible on her pale, placid face. Neither was there visible any of the glowing brilliancy imparted by Mrs. Bloom's rare wine. There sat, at her usual seat, the same quiet, placid girl, unmoved, but unhappy.

Deep, very deep, lay the young heart so stricken. Its struggles no mortal knew. I felt for her. I knew the intensity of her grief; and I also knew how jealously she guarded against the slightest exposure of her feelings. Her pride, too, lofty and severe, stood sentinel, that no pent-up sigh might escape to betray the secret of Stuart's desertion. What she suffered, she alone can tell. But bravely bore she her burden; nor did she share it with one human being. She had brought this fell calamity on herself, and she bore up like a heroine. No tear stood upon

her long lash; no quiver on her lip. She had schooled herself into a stern endurance, worthy of a stoic. Mrs. Bloom sat before her breakfast-cups, malicious and triumphant, and seemed to say, "Behold, I have conquered!"

She bade us go to Grantland, to call on Miss Grant.

"What!" I exclaimed, "*we* make a fashionable, formal call at Grantland?"

"Yes," said the widow, spreading out her palms upon the table; "henceforth, myself, my family, and of course, the stranger that is within my gates, are equal with the Grants. They particularly request, that a friendly and cordial intercourse should be established; and you must certainly call to-day. I will remain at home and attend to customers."

At the proper hour we dressed out in our best, and after Mrs. Bloom had commented on Rosa's simple toilet, and arranged all things to her satisfaction, she allowed us to depart. Before reaching the great gate, we were met by Mr. Hepburn, who was walking briskly towards the millinery. He turned, and joined us. Soon after this, Mr. Grant overtook us in his buggy. No sooner were we perceived by him, than he threw the reins to his man, descended, and joined Rosa. Mr. Hepburn, to my astonishment, offered me his arm, as naturally as any other gentleman. I looked up at my companion, and instead of the *bête noir* I had conjured up, I saw simply a human being, who had suffered, and grown harsh. He was tall and

pale, and dressed in a full suit of black. He was not a handsome man, but one of those whose first appearance makes you start and look again, at a man so singular and sombre.

There was on his face an expression of disgust and disrelish for everything; and yet, I fancied I detected a passing gleam of kindness, mingled with a settled, or rather habitual melancholy. There was certainly an outer crust, hard and rugged; whether there were warm currents and gushing fountains beneath, I was not yet able to say. Of one thing I was certain; that he was not the man I had taken him to be. And though he seemed to have cultivated most assiduously an elevated contempt for all things earthly, yet there were yearnings in his heart unfilled. He had sown and had not reaped; he had hoped and had been deceived.

I must also confess to the reader, that I could not, for the life of me, discover whether his spleen, or his stomach, or his liver, were affected.

To my surprise, this man, so superior to his fellow-men, sported a gold-headed cane, and glittering fob-chain. He wore highly-polished boots, and a shining hat, and dearly loved all deference and awe, from the very beings he professed to despise. Mr. Hepburn was very short-sighted; and this defect gave him that peculiar frown, which generally spread fear and consternation wherever he went. Besides this, he was stiff and taciturn, and had a way of

saying "Pshaw!" when any silly speech or action provoked him. All these things combined, had made him quite an ogre to right-minded people.

Now I am a plain body, and have a way of running counter to people's prejudices, and striking against their most cherished opinions, which has done me more harm than good.

This well-assorted couple, Mr. Hepburn and myself, after some minutes of profound silence, opened a conversation.

"I was on my way to see you, Miss," said he.

"To see *me*, sir?"

"Yes, Miss. My young friend Stuart requested me to take charge of you during his absence."

"La! my dear sir, I am old enough to take care of myself."

"So I should have thought last night, when I found you in full chase after that animal, so often overtaken, commonly called a locomotive."

I was somewhat piqued, but Mr. Hepburn was so dry, and chuckled to himself with so much complacency, and seemed to think he had said such a very good thing, that I permitted him to enjoy his joke in his own way.

"Will you be good enough to tell me where Stuart has gone, sir? And what could have induced him to leave last night?"

"Those are bold questions, Miss," said he.

"You have unique ideas of boldness, sir."

"But I rather like this—I believe I prefer that people should speak out frankly, and expect the same in return."

"Very well, then, speak out frankly," said I, brusquely.

"Hark, little woman!" said he, looking sternly at me; "people do not question *me*; people are afraid of me, do you hear? They draw back, and let me pass; they do not ask why nor wherefore; do you understand?"

"Yes, I understand perfectly, sir; but you do not seem to understand that there are other people in the world who like their own way, sir. Have you never met with any of those, sir? Now I am not afraid to question anybody under the sun; nor am I afraid of you; you frightened me once, but you cannot now."

"Do not speak of that—I suffered—I was not myself."

"You were very rude to a lady, sir, who had done nothing in the world to provoke you; and you should apologize."

"Well, I beg your pardon."

"Some explanation seems necessary," said I.

"But that violates my secret."

"*Your* secret! Have you a secret? has everybody in these parts a secret? Thank God!" I cried, raising my hands, "I am not rich; I have no terrible secret preying upon my better feelings, and sucking my heart's best blood. I am poor and free, too humble for those poisonous darts which so keenly wound my betters. I have the will to do that which my heart seeth is good; and, God be

praised, this is what I, poor simpleton, dare to call happiness!"

He drew back, and looked at me.

"It seems to me, Nancy Joyner, that you are a very original and stout-hearted little woman."

I said nothing. He pointed to Rosa with his cane, who walked before us with Mr. Grant, and said,

"My young friend charged me to watch over her, too. While he works for me, I must work for him; do you understand?"

"Yes," replied I, "I understand; match-making is a dangerous business; people who have no love-scrapes of their own are eternally thrusting themselves into other people's," &c., &c.

I had quoted his own words of the preceding night. He indulged in one of his short, dry laughs. His risibles seemed to have rusted in their hinges; and, at best, this rich man's laugh was but a grating creak.

At the inner gate Mr. Hepburn left us. The nonchalant brightened at our approach. Rosa was treated with the deference due the future Mrs. Grant. Pocahontas kissed her on the cheek, and Grant made ten thousand faces, each one more expressive of delight than its illustrious predecessor.

We were treated to cake and wine. Pocahontas was most familiar and jocular. She related some choice anecdotes to me, and pressed her rare cakes upon me, and filled

my glass, and drank my good health. She said she had ordered Jemima to send Dumpling with a waiter of cakes, and confections, and all sorts of nice things, to Mrs. Bloom; and that, on this precious waiter, was a cake which she sent to Rosa and me, made by her own fair hands. She complimented Rosa on her fine appearance the evening before, and hoped I enjoyed the music. She showed me some rare old paintings, and allowed me to visit the octagonal saloon. She even took us out into her conservatory, and called up the gardener, who gave us a budget of long names, which seemed to roll spontaneously out of his flowery mouth. I was charmed; I had never paid so delightful a visit in my life. Surely, how good-nature and a certain kind of *bonhommie*, do improve all things here below.

After a pleasant hour, we returned to our guardian angel, Mrs. Bloom. On the way, we encountered Dumpling, with empty waiter, and despair upon her face. She sat upon a stump by the roadside, and was rocking backwards and forwards, and filling the air with a low monotonous wail. Some mighty grief lay upon Dumpling's heart, which she was endeavouring to still by rocking, as nurses do their babies. We gathered from her, mingled with sobs and hysterical ejaculations, a most dismal and lamentable tale. Dumpling had been waylaid and robbed by that embryo bandit, Cook's boy, whom she favoured with all the maledictions in her not very select vocabulary. Her

waiter had been overturned, the black-cake smashed,—and, alas! Dumpling had lived to see that boy run off with his pockets full of black-cake and all sorts of nick-nacks! We left her sitting on the stump, wiping her eyes with her apron, and rocking, like a desperate and broken-hearted Dumpling, for evermore.

We reached home, to find the roadside robber undergoing an examination. He stood before his judge, Mrs. Bloom, with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, one foot forwards, his eyes fixed upon the ceiling, and altogether as cool and collected as could have been expected from a gentleman of his parts. He wore, also, a deeply-injured look,—the look of a boy-martyr,—mingled with the sublime fortitude of a saint.

"I never seed a black-cake in my life, mum. I seldom sees what you may call a yaller one, and never tayses (tastes) dem."

"Very well, go away, and never let me hear of your robbing people in the road again, sir."

"I didn't intend you should o' hearn o' dis, mum. Meantime I'll rise and flutter, mum." And Cook's boy, with a hop, skip, and jump, landed in his old region, the back yard.

When next I saw him, he was holding his sides, and laughing, and gesticulating at the window, near which Mrs. Bloom sat, and giving everybody to understand how he had come it over her. Cook said, "'that boy' had enough black-cake in him to kill him," but seemed to think

his life was insured against everything but the gallows, towards which she insisted he was bending his steps.

From Rosa I learned the object of Stuart's sudden journey south. A rumour had reached Mr. Hepburn concerning his son. It was said, that the unhappy young man had been taken up on a suspicion of forgery. She was almost sure he had not fallen so low as to be guilty of this crime. At all events, he had made his escape from the authorities, and had fled, Rosa could not tell where, whether to Oregon, California, or beyond the Red Sea. Stuart was to find him, if he were at the ends of the earth. It was his mission, to bring back this ruined hope to his yearning father, and to that duty and happiness he had so shamefully forsaken.

"This unfortunate young man," continued Rosa, in her quiet way, "was brought to this melancholy career by misplaced affection. His love was whole-souled and sincere, while the lady's was less stable. She has been described to me as a very beautiful but unprincipled creature, who felt no remorse at the degradation she had caused, or the solemn vow she had broken. She took a wicked delight in irritating the son against his father; and she it was, who, in a moment of pique against Mr. Hepburn, suggested the shameful treatment he received at the hands of his too much indulged and too tenderly beloved son. The cruel fair one married, removed to Pensacola, and died. The picture you saw at Mr. Hepburn's was purchased by young Hep-

burn, in Italy, at an enormous price, because it resembled his faithless ladye-love. She was mamma's niece and protégée," and Rosa closed her narrative with a sigh.

The April showers were over, May had passed mild and sweetly tempered, the roses of June had blushed, and blown, and fallen, as all must fall, and the milliner-girl bore proudly up, under the great burden which lay on her heart. And never a murmur escaped her lip, or the shadow of a sigh. Great was the moral strength of this fair specimen of a sex, whom men compare to the "shade by the quivering aspen made." September came—that gently sighing, plaintive, mourning month, and methought the waxen lid drooped lower on the pearly cheek, and the step was a shade less light. But onward she toiled, firm in her pride, and unshaken in her duty.

I often wondered what had become of Stuart, why he did not write, and why he so remorselessly tested the strength and constancy of one whom it were sacrilege to doubt. It was evident that he knew nothing of the sex. He measured this young girl's unformed, unpractised opinions, yet crude and undeveloped, with his own, which had stood the wear and tear of the world. He should have remembered that she was not yet practically convinced of the right. Though her mind turned instinctively to the right, yet she was too young and inexperienced to rely as firmly upon herself as he could, who had been toiling on the beaten track of life since early boy-

hood. With all Stuart's real worth and nobility of soul, there was mixed a kind of dogged obstinacy of purpose. He had no talent, and no desire, to be eternally fluttering around a fair and dangerously-tutored coquette. He wanted no girl for a wife whose mother had more control over her than he had. Indeed, Stuart was tired of Mrs. Bloom, and leaving that remarkable lady to entangle herself in her own meshes, as many remarkable ladies have done before, he bade farewell to Centreville, trusting in Providence for all he wished.

But his last request, while his heart smote him for his ungentle conduct to one who was all gentleness and timidity, was to Mr. Hepburn, to counsel and guard her for him—to keep his eye upon her, and to befriend her when the little trembler needed a friend. Consequently, Mr. Hepburn stood, drawn up like a grim sentinel, in the background, ready to fire when given bounds were passed, and determined to keep the enemy at bay.

Meantime, Mrs. Bloom was noiselessly and almost imperceptibly at work building, like those submarine architects, an island, which some day should appear. No shadow on the once shadowless face escaped her keen, observant eye. No pent-up sigh but reached her listening ear. Stealthily she went her way, laying up plan after plan for consummation, when the time should arrive. No word fell from her lips but told on the young girl's heart. Gradually, by covered insinuations, and bits of worldly

wisdom, and rare precepts, and her own example, she was fitting her victim for the sacrifice. We were on an equality with the Grants. Delicate and kind were they in all their dealings with the girl. She was allowed more freedom. She walked when and where she chose. She was never *ennuyéed*, never forced into the saloon, never tortured, never racked, never censured, as of yore.

Mrs. Bloom no longer set up her stereotyped wail over the miseries of poverty. She no longer *talked* poverty, but she *acted* it. Day by day the little cottage on the shadowy street lost a little of its comfort, and its pride. The old mahogany was lustreless, the French mirror less carefully veiled, the sofa ragged. Mrs. Bloom gradually lost her jaunty air, and her caps were no longer precisely *à la mode*. Rosa saw all this, and it smote upon her heart. She saw the weary, uncomplaining look stamped on her proud mother's face—saw the comforts of her home, one by one, fade and disappear—saw poverty coming slowly, but surely, and the shadow darkened on her brow.

Was all this only for effect? Were the hidden meshes still forming in Mrs. Bloom's busy brain, or had her efforts relaxed? Had her ambition grown tired, and was it lagging on the way. Or had she seen from the hill-top, the valley lying dark and low, to which all her plotting, and her pride, and her hopes, but led? Had the filmed eye of

her victim spoken for the lips so silent? Had the altered looks revealed a history no words would ever tell?

And Rosa—heroine worthy of a better pen—oh! she was proud, and true to her woman's duty. There were no loud railings against fate, no petty maledictions, no repinings for her high fallen lot. She was nobly planned, nobly formed, and well she sustained the high dignity of her character. Neither caught she the sympathy of any one. Nor did she fill unwilling ears with ceaseless plaint. Sometimes she smiled—often she jested—sometimes vainly essayed to bring the old light back to the cottage—and cheerfully she went her way up,—up,—the toilsome steep of her young life.

CHAPTER VII.

AND LAST.

The authoress thanks the courteous reader who has kindly accompanied her so far—and apologizes for having been at times tiresome—and at times rather ill-natured—and at times not so interesting as she should have been.

Now, I must give the details of an adventure of which I was not an eye-witness, but which was related to me by one of the actors therein.

Early in the morning of the 13th of October, Mrs. Bloom asked me, as a favour, to step over to Grantland with some work she had just finished for Pocahontas, and to learn if it suited that lady in every particular. I cheerfully undertook the commission, and walked gaily over to Grantland, singing as I went:

“Oh! what a joyous day,
Beaming with pleasure.
Light bounds my heart so gay—
Joy without measure,” &c.

Miss Grant's maid, Jemima, showed me into the music-

room, and, opening the piano, and drawing out some portfolios, begged me to amuse myself until Miss Grant could see me. She would be engaged about an hour, she said. Never dreaming of harm, I was enchanted with this arrangement. I could have amused myself in this room for a couple of days. It was during my absence from the millinery, which was prolonged indefinitely, that the following events occurred.

On this joyous day, which to me betokened so much pleasure, Mrs. Bloom prevailed on her daughter to accompany her to the new building on Grant Row, to examine the apartments, &c. Having arrived at the house, the lady led her daughter into a large apartment, newly fitted up, comfortably furnished, and divided by sliding doors. Having deposited Rosa in this room, Mrs. Bloom locked the door, and took the key in her pocket. To Rosa's surprise, Mr. Grant emerged from behind the sliding door, and, taking her hand, led her to a sofa.

"My dearest girl," he said, tenderly, "you see in me a lover most miserable, who, driven by your coldness to the last extremity, now sues, as never man sued, for one kind word, one single smile."

Rosa looked around for her mother, but she had retreated.

"Mr. Grant, why do you force me to repeat that which is as disagreeable to me, as it can be to you?"

"Is there no hope then?—none?"

"My friend," said Rosa, with a smile, "whom I shall ever love as my benefactor, I must beg you to desist. You cause me great pain by this unhappy suit,—indeed you do."

"Rosa! can you bid me despair, and smile? What is money—what my broad lands—if they cannot assist me here! My dear, dear girl, relent. You cannot persist in being so cruel, if you have any feeling, surely."

"My eternal gratitude is yours, Mr. Grant, but nothing more," said Rosa, reluctantly.

"Then, you, who cannot see an insect die, behold your human victim!" cried Mr. Grant, ferociously, dropping on one knee, and drawing forth a most murderous-looking revolver. This instrument, with a mighty flourish, he placed at his breast, that its contents might bear upon the distressed region of the heart. Rosa screamed, Mrs. Bloom, ensconced behind the convenient partition, reappeared. She implored her daughter, by all love, and duty, and fear of murder, and the law, to relent, but in vain. She painted, with a tragic air, the huge wreck Mr. Grant contemplated making of his fine person. But they had overacted their parts. Rosa shook her head sceptically. Seeing this, Mr. Grant threw away his unloaded weapon, which would not have singed a hair of his head—wig, I mean—and, raising the window, bade some one without be ready. He then informed Rosa, that since she had thought

proper to force him to extreme measures, she must blame herself alone for the consequences.

He took the struggling girl in his huge arms, and was about to bear her to a carriage in waiting, when, at a sign from Mrs. Bloom, he seated her on the sofa, and sitting close beside her, held her tightly. Mrs. Bloom then drew a chair, and commenced, in her peculiar half-persuasive, half-commanding way, to speak thus—

“My daughter! you know as well as I do, that we owe the very bread we eat to Mr. Grant. But that is nothing. His love for you is so great that he is glad to support us, even with the small hope of reward your casual smiles have given him. Now, I foolishly thought with him, that your finely-spun delicacy would have preferred these benefits as coming from your husband, rather than your lover.”

“Mamma, why do you harass me thus? I am no perjurer—neither do I make a false promise. No fear of poverty—no threat—nothing—hear me, mamma, and you, Mr. Grant,—no power under Heaven shall shake me in my faith, and confidence and duty to him, to whom you gave me!”

I can imagine the sublimity of her countenance at these words. I can imagine the unquenchable lustre of her eye, and the clear, undaunted, open brow. I can imagine the mother quailing beneath the beautiful majesty of such strength; and I can imagine the rich man's chagrin, when he found that gold, all-powerful gold, could never purchase

such as this. They were silent. They paused before the grandeur of Right.

“What is this! what is this!” cried the widow, briskly jumping up—for the wily woman had yet another trump-card, which she had reserved for the last. “Mr. Grant, you have not told her, then?”

“No, madam, I was about to take her to my friend, the parson, without further parley.”

Mrs. Bloom slowly drew from her steel-bag a bit of printed paper, and, turning away, handed it to Rosa. On the paper, Rosa read these words:

“Died, of yellow fever, in the 25th year of his age, Roland Stuart, of Virginia. This noble young man, in fine health, imprudently ventured into this city during one of our awful visitations, and quickly fell a victim. Peace to his ashes!”

Horror sat upon the young girl's face. She tore herself from Mr. Grant's embrace, and with compressed lips, rigid, tearless, and blanched, she paced the room. The cruel blow had struck her heart. No cry escaped her, for she had been schooled into passive, soul-crushing endurance. She placed the paper in her bosom, and she felt the dreadful words sweep across her heart, and sear it. Suddenly, she felt the awful, visible reality of this last cruel blow. She could bear no more. Reason fled appalled. But one bright gleam shot across her bosom, ere she sank senseless on the floor; it was the hope of death, and release,

When she awoke, she had forgotten all of time and earth. She could collect nothing from the chaos of her mind. She knew not whether she were on the verge of time, or of eternity.

Great thoughts loomed up before her, and the shapes of dim-remembered thoughts rolled off in heavy, vapoury forms. She could catch nothing—dim, and dark, and troubled were the phantoms of her memory. The beams of the setting sun tinged the pale curtains of her bed.

“And I am left—oh, death!” she murmured or thought, “left stranded on the shores of time! But it is so—am I indeed so wretched?”

“Be quiet, my dearest; your thoughts wander, my love; I am here,” and Mrs. Bloom hung over her bartered child.

“Mamma—oh! is it all a dream? Say, your poor Rosa has been dreaming, mamma.”

Mrs. Bloom was almost conquered by that sad, sweet face, pleading touchingly for a little hope. She shook her head. She would not dispel that uneasy dream, though her stricken victim implored. She gave the suffering girl some drops in a spoon, and she slept again.

Again Rosa awoke. The breath of a gentle hazy morn caressed her pale face, and kissed the waxen lids, and brought back a tingling glow upon her deathly cheek. Thankfully, she inhaled the cool, pure, dewy-laden air, which so softly wooed her youth's freshness back.

The mother still was near, hovering over her couch by

day, and in the solemn hours of the still night. Rosa turned her clear, gleaming, unshrinking eye upon her. Mrs. Bloom turned away from that searching, steady, inquiring look. Larger, and as pure as amber, were the soul-piercing eyes, which had almost looked into eternity.

“Mamma,” said the gentle sufferer, “mamma, lift me up. I would look out upon the morning. I would see the young autumnal day, and drink in its balmy springing air.”

Mrs. Bloom drew aside the curtains, and the azure skies, the floating clouds, the church spire, and the golden light appeared. Rosa clasped her hands. The earth was fair and beautiful, but sorrow and death were there; she turned her eyes to Heaven, for there her treasure was.

Her hands were thin and pale, and on her finger a ring hung loosely.

“Come near to me, mamma,” she said, in a whisper. “This is the ring of promise, by which I pledged myself to him. The other, his ring of hope, lies in my little box, just on my bureau. Pray, give it to me, mamma.”

“Not now, my love—we are not at home, dearest.”

“Not at home! where—where are we?”

“At Mr. Grant's, my darling.”

“At Mr. Grant's!—Then I will not stay. Take me away—oh! take me back to the bosom of my old, sad home! Come, let us go!”

She grasped her mother's hand, but she could not go, poor thing.

"Send Miss Nancy to me. *She* is not a dream, is she?"

"Miss Nancy is at Grantland, my dear."

"Oh! what has happened? I am afraid to think. Do not leave me, mamma; my thoughts kill me."

The poor girl sank back exhausted. But Mrs. Bloom had conquered—had crushed the frail flower in its delicate beauty. She stood long gazing upon the transient flush upon the young sufferer's face. She marked the full eye, so startling in its brilliancy, the brow, almost transparent. Remorse stirred in the mother's heart. But Mrs. Bloom stilled its unwelcome truth. She believed she had done all for the best. She believed when her daughter was rich, and of course, happy, she would thank her for what she had done. Thus she stifled the mother's tenderness, which all the poor girl's suffering and patient forbearance had aroused. She turned from the sick-bed to hide a tear.

Mrs. Bloom, strange to say, had a heart which prosperity might have softened, but adversity, and the frowns of the world she adored, had checked all its genial warmth and tenderness. Now when she saw that wealth for which she had suffered and striven so long—the fruit for which she had toiled so many, many years, hanging low and ready to be plucked, she could not yield to her better nature, and relinquish the tempting prize. She believed her

child would live to thank her. She longed to be numbered again among the great in the land. She wanted wealth, and power, and deference, and awe. She wanted to see her daughter on the shining height, beautiful and pure. All things were working well, thanks to her admirable management, and there was no peace yet for the fair, living sacrifice thus offered to her god.

Mr. Grant was again brought upon the tapis. He sent his servants daily to inquire about the invalid, and then he came himself. She was better, they said, but never shone beauty so terribly beautiful. Her clear, burning glance, smote the heart like a fire-brand. Her voice vibrated through every nerve, and one felt in her presence unholy and unpurified. Mrs. Bloom walked to and fro, and her glances wandered uneasily towards the large glowing, intense eyes, which followed her every step. There was something on that woman's mind, lashing and tormenting her. She could not meet the strange, searching look, so often, in the stillness of the sick-room, fixed upon her. And from the lowly curtained bed, there came often sighs and murmurs of prayers, and thoughts escaping the pearly lips, and now and then, the large eyes were moist, as though a tear, too, had fallen.

But not one word of complaint. Not a question of the past. Holy, and meek, and beautiful she lay under the hand of Him who chasteneth whom He loveth.

The physician said her system was severely shocked,

and recommended all care, and gentleness, and love. All that kindness could suggest, was done for this poor heart-broken, uncomplaining, patient creature. She was so humble, and thankful, and smiled, and tried to be better for their sakes.

Miss Pocahontas came in, and said—

“How is my dear Rosa to-day? I have brought her some iced lemonade and some gentle wine. I want to see her pretty cheek glowing again.”

“Thank you. Ah! you are so kind. I have such kind friends. I can never repay you for all this,” were poor Rosa’s earnest, heartfelt words.

Again she came.

“I have waited long to see my little Rosa, who has had a pleasant nap, I hope. I bring her some tuberoses, some geraniums, and this little cup to drink her cooling draughts from.”

Again Rosa was all thankfulness. She knew not what to say, they were so kind. Each day they loaded her with favours and presents of every kind. Pocahontas hung over her, and every unobtrusive attention which deep affection prompts, was ministered by her. Mrs. Bloom hovers around her purple-cushioned chair, and does not chide her melancholy, but the faintest smile is welcomed by that conscience-tortured mother with delight. Mr. Grant comes gently and noiselessly in; and he, too, by every aid, invites returning health, and ministers to her as

a brother. The young girl’s heart is touched, and in her innocence she prays for strength to overcome her weakness, and make these kind friends happy in her turn. Each day brought renewed vigour to the invalid. The crisis was passed, and the physician took his leave of his convalescing patient.

The air braces her up. She sits beside the window, and pleasant is the face of the fair and peaceful earth. Her appetite returns, and nothing that can strengthen and invigorate is neglected by those who are ever near her. They wrap her warmly, and take long, pleasant drives, watching the eye as it lighted up, and the cheek as it beautifully glows. They read to her—they amuse her—they get up games of whist—they teach her chess—they show her pretty new stitches with pretty flosses and crewels—they bring the old guitar, and though the tears return at the sight, she draws the dear old instrument close to her bosom, and sings again her simple songs.

And now they come again—they who had ministered to her, and given her new life, and ask one favour, only one. Stuart is taken from her; whom has she on earth but them? They gently make their proposition. They would take her to their bosoms, and make her happy. Pocahontas would call her sister, Grant would call her wife—what had their dearest girl to say to that? She turned to them in all her innocence and trust. She laid her thin small hand into

her mother's, and then, with angelic sweetness, said, while the blushes tinged her cheek—

“Dear mamma, since I can never be happy myself, never be but what you see me now, my duty bids me make those friends happy who have done so much for me. But I am weak and feeble now; wait with me until my poor heart is strengthened, and then, if it be His good pleasure, I will endeavour, in my humble way, to repay our dear friends for all their kindness, and forbearance, and love.”

“Was there ever,” cried Mr. Grant, “such goodness and such purity!”

“My darling!” said Mrs. Bloom, drawing her to her bosom; “dearest Rosa, your mother thanks you from the bottom of her heart. Oh! my child! may God in his goodness spare you to us—that we may devote our lives to your happiness—that we may comfort and bless you, dearest, for all you have suffered, and all you have done!”

“And may He give me strength,” said the girl, raising her tearful eyes to Heaven, “to do my duty here on earth—to live for those to whom He has given me—to spread peace and comfort around me—and to be humble, and faithful, and enduring to the end.”

Tears stood in every eye, and the mother wept, and covered her face.

And then they came again, still kind, loving, and tender, and asked her to sign her name. A paper was handed to her, which she read,—and then Mr. Grant took her

trembling hand, and guided it while she wrote Rosa Washington Bloom. And then he, for the first time, gently smoothed the hair from her marble brow, and imprinted a kiss upon that pure and holy spot. She blushed—she begged him never to do that again—and then she begged him to forgive her—and raised her holy brow, and, like a statue, received another unmoved.

And now the weary prisoner was released. She returned to her desolate home, broken in spirit, care-worn, hopeless, and sad. She sought her little room, opened the little box on the bureau, drew out the ring of hope, and wept. Then she sat gazing long and steadfastly on a noble, manly face, and then she opened the frame, and took out the bit of paper which her mother had shown her on the morning she could never forget. She read it over—replaced it in the case—put back the ring of hope and the picture, and locked the little box. Then, turning to her humble bed, she knelt beside it, and clasped her hands and communed with her God.

I sat in the little parlour, which had lost all the light of former days. Its trim, jaunty air was gone. No flowers bloomed on the mantel—no lustre shone from the once polished mahogany. The saloon was closed—the sewing-girls dispersed. The door-bell no longer rang merrily all the day, and the little cottage on the shady street was not like itself. The bonnet-sign no longer dangled to every breeze; and all the old bustle, and tramping of feet and

hurry on the stairway, and the sound of voices in the rooms above, and the ring of new-comers, and cook's quick step as she answered every call,—all this had passed away. There was no boisterous Stuart coming in with his fresh, ringing laugh, and provoking jokes. No belated caps—no sewing by candle-light—no cutting and thrusting of words—no storms, even in cook's dominions,—all was at rest. The hurly-burly was over—and the all-conquering Napoleon of a woman, stately, cautious in speech, and dignified of mien.

A rumour had reached me of Stuart's death. How, or when, I cannot say, but somebody had mentioned in my hearing, that somebody had received a telegraphic message announcing his death. I wanted to see Mr. Hepburn—he surely knew all about it. I asked about Mr. Hepburn, and was informed that he had been absent from home two months. He need guard her no longer, I thought, and had quitted his post.

Mrs. Bloom led her daughter into the little parlour where I sat.

“Oh, my dear friend!” cried the poor girl, rushing to my arms, “I have suffered fearfully!” And she hung upon me convulsively, and wept. Mrs. Bloom took her gently away, and smoothing her hair tenderly from her transparent brow, said,—

“Yes, Miss Nancy, our poor Rosa has indeed suffered.

But, my dearest child, you must nerve yourself—you must bear up, for your doting mother's sake.”

“Yes, mamma, I will yet be strong; I will conquer all. Not one rebellious feeling shall remain unsubdued. I will be strong. Your daughter, mamma, will do her duty, though she die.” And, with an almost superhuman effort, she forced the thick-coming tears back to the bursting fountains from whence they came, and stilled the mighty sorrow which lay heaving in her breast. I remembered poor Stuart's words the last night I saw him: “She is weak, yet stronger than I,—fragile, yet clinging closer than the vine,—timid as the fawn on his native hills, yet firmer than the mountain's base.”

And firm and unshaken, even in her desolation, she stood, pure and undefiled, and ready for the sacrifice.

Days and weeks dragged their slow length along, and Mr. Grant claimed his bride.

“Wait—wait—yet a little while!” urged the poor girl.

At last, overcome by entreaties, and constant persecution, she named her wedding-day. Joyful moment for Mrs. Bloom, and the adoring Mr. Grant. He was intoxicated with delight. He would sit for hours in the little parlour, watching keenly, nervously, for the rare smiles which, now and then, flitted across the placid face of her he loved. He worshipped her. He was hushed and subdued by her presence. He dared not even take her hand. He was silent when she was near. He

seemed to crouch when he heard her footsteps in the hall. He would have knelt to her shadow with humility. Day after day he would come in, and ask her how she was, and bring her favourite flowers, and have his carriage ever awaiting her pleasure; and hang upon her every word, and watch, still keenly, for her smiles. He was her very slave. Bravely she struggled all the while; and Mrs. Bloom and Miss Grant, congenial spirits, entered with a zest into the wedding preparations. They were ever in the city, hurrying from shop to shop, and gossiping with all they met, and engaging a perfect carnival. They hunted bargains, and news; and bought more, and heard more, than ever ladies did before. Mrs. Bloom was in her element—a fish thrown back into its native stream—and Pocahontas ready to do her bidding, and to be led by her for ever. Grant declared his future mother-in-law was an astonishing woman. Indeed, he was lost in admiration of the two. Mrs. Bloom, with her tact, wit, readiness, and resources, astonished him beyond measure. What a woman she was—gracious! what a tremendous woman! Mrs. Bloom had him completely under her thumb. He was sold, and lost in admiration all the while. Pocahontas found Mrs. Bloom indispensable to her daily comfort. She could scarcely exist an hour without her, and consequently, Mrs. Bloom was always at Grantland. Rosa and I had the millinery to ourselves. We sat all the quiet days, and

a greater part of the nights, alone. She was pensive and resigned. I really miserable.

One night, we had been talking about Stuart and Mr. Hepburn. Rosa said she had met Mr. Hepburn three times, as she was riding out, and he had looked at her very earnestly. I had seen him pass the millinery several times, of late, and wondered why he had not called. Our thoughts were very mournful. Poor Rosa seemed more sorrowful than usual. She sat rocking restlessly. Her thoughts troubled her. Her face was very pale, and she seemed the shadow of her former self. We sat in silent sadness. The clock struck twelve, and Mrs. Bloom did not return. Suddenly, a sound, plaintive and subdued, broke upon our ears. It was the chord of a guitar, struck by a master hand. The low tones swelled again, and died away upon the breeze, as it sighed around the house. Then the song broke forth impetuously upon the low murmuring chords. One clear, gushing, prolonged note, from the voice of the unseen songster, and Rosa quivered, so intense was her emotion. With bended ear, she listens. Hush!

“Bride of my soul!

Sparkling and bright;

Come in thy beauty,

Come hither to-night!

Bride of my soul, lofty and free;

Smiling, caressing—come thou to me.

"Bride of my soul!
 Beautiful Rose;
 Torn from my fond arms,
 In dewy repose.
 Heaven-made bride, I pine for the light
 Glittering about thee—come thou to-night!

"Hear me, my girl!
 For thee I sigh;
 Thy floating tresses,
 Thy clear midnight eye.
 Come to this heart, beating for thee;
 Smiling and blessing, come thou to me."

"I come! I come!" cried the girl, like one in a dream. Her eye expanded, and glowed, charged with a new fire. With a bound, she followed the voice. She stood upon a knoll, bathed in moonbeams, and the crystal light lay in pools of molten silver at her feet. Hush! A footstep—and a form emerges from the shadow. A wild cry of joy arose; and, encircled in the arms of her lover, she sank oppressed with delight. They could not question—they could not explain. What was the past, or the menacing future to them, whose souls were steeped in the intoxicating present? Words! how paled your power here! Words could bring no eloquence here. Soul had met soul; and silence was the mighty eloquence of that still, majestic night. I saw the girl as she bent her head in prayer. I heard her say "My God! my God! Thou hast not forsaken me!" And

as I saw the angel face, with its halo of purity and childish innocence, I raised my hand, and blest her as she prayed.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

And thus they met—they whom falsehood, and cunning had so cruelly severed. Stuart's faithful sentinel had well performed his part, dropping him a line in the hour of need, and recalling him ere it was too late.

Now drop we the veil over the lover and the beloved. Sacred is the happiness and holy the communing of such hearts.

Mrs. Bloom went on with her vast preparations, unheeded by the bride. Mr. Grant sent bouquets in precious baskets, and rose-tinted notes embedded there—but the midnight song was the song for her, and the low magic chord struck once beneath her window, the music which stirred her soul.

The day before the wedding was a mellow, sunlit, December day. No birds were singing, but a sighing wind stole around the millinery, and mourned plaintively at a favourite corner, and whispered of the frost, and the sleet, and the ice, and the snow. A ring at the door startled Rosa. A familiar step was heard in the hall, and Stuart stood once more in the little parlour, and accosted Mrs. Bloom.

"Ha! so soon!" cried the lady retreating.

"Am I too soon, my dear Madam?" he inquired, bending over her. "Behold a guest for the bridal!"

"No, sir—oh no—you are not too soon—but you may be too late, an idea which seems never to have entered your head," she said, recovering her equilibrium, and her sarcastic powers, at once.

"That is unfortunate—but you do not seem surprised at my resurrection. Do you not see that I am not dead, but alive, and that I am come in the flesh, to claim the bride you have so faithfully kept for me?"

"Dead! dead! why, who said you were dead?" asked Mrs. Bloom, apparently in utter astonishment at the bare idea.

"It seems that I owe my untimely end to you, Madam."

"Fie! fie! Rosa—have you been endeavouring to excuse your infidelity, by throwing the blame on me, mad-cap?" said the mother playfully, but with a very bad grace.

But Mrs. Bloom, under the pressure of unexpected events, had overlooked a very material circumstance. If she thought that delirium and sickness could have effaced the cruel blow, she ought to have at least taken the precaution to destroy the printed obituary. But murder will out, and so will falsehood. Rosa took from her bosom a miniature, and on opening it, displayed the very bit of printed paper with which Mrs. Bloom had nearly deprived her of life, and forced a promise from her, from which her delicate soul revolted. Stuart took the bit of paper, and glancing over it, placed it securely in his pocket-book.

"You surely do not hold me responsible for everything

which appears in the newspapers?" said Mrs. Bloom, undaunted to the last.

Poor Rosa's face plead so earnestly for her mother, that Stuart spared the unscrupulous woman for the daughter's sake. He answered not a word, but bowed to the lady, and withdrew. He went directly to the printing-office, and after unheard-of exertions, and examinations, and cross-examinations, coupled with data which he had collected with astonishing accuracy, he forced the truth from a little devil, who had been long thought, by well-disposed persons, to be on the road to ruin. The truth as usual came to light, and little John Moore testified to this effect, viz.: that a gentleman had paid him twenty dollars to strike off that little, harmless bit of printing.

Our hero, who was the soul of despatch, was next seen walking rapidly towards Mr. Grant's law office. Having arrived there, he was not astonished to find that mammoth pile fast asleep and snoring. He closed the door, and aroused the sonorous sleeper.

"Lord-a-mercy! what is all this?" cried Grant, rubbing his great, transparent eyes, which alternately opened and shut upon Stuart.

The injured lover quietly drew forth a pistol, and deliberately cocked it.

"Mur—der—a—tion!" yelled Grant, at the top of his voice. Stuart politely informed him that another such roar

would force him to shoot. He stretched out his hand to a bell-rope, but Stuart drew him back.

"Hurrah!" cried the millionaire, struggling like a great tobacco-worm. "Where are my servants? Call my servants! Do you think I'm to be butchered here at mid-day, sir? Call my servants, I say!"

Stuart placed the pistol at his round head.

"Get away, sir—get away!" cried Grant, while large globules stood congealed upon his brow.

"Give up the promise you forced from that unhappy girl, or your life!" said Stuart, firmly holding him at bay.

The fat man drew a long breath, and said,

"Hands off, sir! hands off! Do you think I am to be bullied in this manner? Fire, if you dare! Fire, and let the commonwealth avenge me. Fire, I say!"

"Your blood be upon your own head," said Stuart, solemnly, as though Grant's doom were formally pronounced.

"Hold, man! Take your infernal weapon away. Methinks, I am yet to see the girl for whom I would lay down my life. Take the paper, and begone!"

Stuart took the paper, on which was written poor Rosa's solemn promise to marry Mr. Grant, and tore it into atoms before his eyes. Mr. Grant sat stupidly looking on. Stuart held up his terrible pistol once more, and pointed to a chair beside a writing-desk.

"What now, man? I will not submit to it. Go away—go away, sir; I will not, upon my sacred honour."

At these words the ever-ready weapon was at his head.

"Take care! I'll swear you are very intent on shooting me. Take care! the d—d thing will go off before you think of it. Lord, what an infernal desperado!"

Mr. Grant backed all over the room, endeavouring to get away from his antagonist. At last, finding further resistance useless, he seated himself with an oath, and said,

"Dictate, d—n you, dictate!"

"I renounce all claim to the hand of Rosa Washington Bloom. I here acknowledge, that by a falsehood that promise was wrested from her, from which I this day release her.

"Given under my hand and seal, on this the — day of —, 18—.

"MAXIMILIAN GRANT."

He handed the paper to Stuart, who bowed, and walked away.

On the wedding-day our conquering hero, accompanied by Mr. Hepburn, alighted from a handsome carriage in front of the millinery. He entered the parlour, handed Mr. Grant's renunciation to Mrs. Bloom, and taking Rosa

gently by the arm, said the carriage was waiting. Tears came in Rosa's eyes. She could not go; there was something yet wanting to complete her happiness. Mrs. Bloom sat stern and cold. Stuart gently entreated, but Rosa would not go. At last, summoning the courage to approach her mother, she drew near to her; and, while the tears glistened in her eyes, she bent her lowly head, and said:

"Mamma! your blessing before I go!"

Mrs. Bloom, thus appealed to, hesitated.

"Come!" said Stuart to his bride.

"No! never, never, without my mother's blessing," cried the girl, firm in her noble duty.

"Madam," said I, "has she ever, even on the brink of the grave, swerved from her duty to you?"

"God bless you, and reward you, my noble child!" said the widow, folding her in her arms, and crying as though her very heart would break. "Best and purest, go! and with your mother's blessing!"

"Thank you! oh! thank you, dear mamma!" cried Rosa, embracing her.

I felt the tears coming into my eyes. I looked up, and Mr. Hepburn was slyly mopping his eyes with a very new pocket handkerchief, and was looking very uncomfortable indeed.

With a burden removed from her pure, unselfish heart, that young girl went to the temple of the Most High, and

breathed before His altar those vows which she was so eminently fitted to fulfil.

"Behold your brother and your sister!" said Mr. Hepburn, proudly leading his reclaimed son to the newly-married pair.

Stuart grasped his hand, and Rosa laid her hand in his, and smiled a sweet welcome to her brother.

Rosa and Stuart were to Mr. Hepburn as his own children. He seemed a new being after this, and the grim old house in the aspen grove assumed a jaunty, inviting air,—looking alive, and hospitable, and wide awake, after its lethargy of so many gloomy years.

And here, I beg leave to retract very many harsh remarks, which, in the course of these pages, I have thought proper to make about that gentleman, so much abused, and so little understood, viz., Mr. Hepburn. I have called him an ogre, a misanthrope, and a miser; and, upon better acquaintance, I have found him anything else. He was possessed of such extreme delicacy of feeling and tenderness, that he was actually forced to don a kind of repulsive, porcupine-looking outer covering, in order to conceal the real state of affairs. He was really so painfully and morbidly sensitive, that he was always in a state of alarm for fear people would find it out. He dwelt in a state of ambush. He chuckled to himself, when he scared the very people who scared him. He lived in a shell, only showing his horns—few suspect-

ing what a delicate animal he was. His charities and his good deeds of every kind were kept profoundly secret. Like a great many men in this world, he exulted in being considered exactly what he was not. He liked to try men—to test poor human nature; which had better not be tested too far. Having tested Stuart and poor Rosa until they were nearly killed, and wounded, in the experiment, he showered gifts and dollars upon them. His home was their home—his pleasures their pleasures—his son their brother. He houses them under the old Dutch roof, which is to him more gloriously beautiful than the sun-gilded roof of the Crystal Palace. His brave old aspens quiver, and turn their silver leaves in very ecstasy of joy; and the man with the porcupine exterior and the grim Dutch dwelling, gloats over the human treasures in his family band. The prodigal, uneasy and distant, and ashamed of himself, at first, gradually accommodated his restless, roving nature to the sweet companionship of this sacred household. And there is no more beautiful light to beck him on, in his new-chosen path, than our Madonna-like, self-sacrificing Rosa. She it is who gently draws him away from the old haunts, and the bottle, and the boon-companions he has loved so long. She it is, who, by gentle arts, which only she can use, woos him back to all that makes life worth living for,—to his home,—and the hearts which have bled for him. She is a

sister to the lost one,—a daughter to the almost childless,—a friend to the friendless,—and a wife to the proudest husband in the world. And there rests upon her lovely bowed head the blessings of all hearts, and the smile of the All-seeing One.

About eighteen months after the marriage of her daughter with the man of her choice, Mrs. Bloom—who, instead of shaving her head and putting on sackcloth and ashes, had been growing perceptibly younger ever since—was led to the hymeneal altar by the Hon. Maximilian Grant. I hope nobody will faint, or go off into hysterics at this piece of news; though, upon my word, it is a most extraordinary occurrence for a middle-aged gentleman to espouse a middle-aged lady. Such events do not often illumine the pages of the histories of the dark ages. Had Mr. Grant only seen from the first what everybody else saw very plainly, viz., that Mrs. Bloom would have suited him much better than her daughter, what a world of trouble and vexation would he have spared us? How many tears—how much bodily suffering—how many dull and tedious pages of foolscap—and how many yawns, oh, reader, would that man have saved by only having his wits about him! But middle-aged gentlemen seldom have their wits about them. It is a notorious fact that they begin to lose their wits when they don their wigs. I ask where are their senses when they go racing after girls of sixteen, who are being

besieged by all the young gallants in the country, and who laugh in their sleeves at these middle-aged, far-sighted, be-wigged, be-toothed gentry, who are leaving whole rows of middle-aged respectable females, to make themselves fun-bunches for lads and lasses just escaped from school? I ask my readers if everything I have said is not literally true? I ask them if (owing solely to the blindness and ridiculous vanity of middle-aged gentlemen) middle-aged ladies are of any earthly use in a matrimonial point of view?

I ask them if they cannot lay their fingers upon dozens of middle-aged gentlemen, to whom my words would come home, if they would only open their eyes and see that they *are* middle-aged, and *are* be-toothed, and *are* be-wigged, and *are* born simpletons to everybody else but themselves? But methinks I see these gentry, snickering and showing the most natural teeth in the world, and hunching each other, as much as to say, they understand *me*—they see *my* drift—they are not such born simpletons after all! That I would gladly make them open their eyes upon me; that I am in this pet because they do not come running after me; that—ha, ha!—I may go, for a pert old maid, and mend my temper and my pen, while they, gay, dashing, unrheumatic, ungouty, lithe, limber, harum-scarum fellows as they are, go, Barney-like, after the girls! Indeed, I am very much beholden to these lively fellows,

very much, indeed. Still, I beg to say that I am totally disinterested in all I say, having no designs upon them, upon my word! Really, gentlemen, I am a very modest lady; and having preached enough, and harangued enough, and given you advice enough, I beg to open your eyes to the truth, by signing myself,

Your most obedient servant,

NANCY J. HEPBURN (!)

THE END.