

ELMWOOD

OR

The Children of the Manse.

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BY

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OR

## The Children of the Manse.

### CHAPTER I.

"Home, home, sweet, sweet home,  
There is no place like home;  
There is no place like home."

Thus chanted a clear, rich, mellow voice, from a window of an old lumbering stage-coach, as it wound around the brow of a rocky eminence, overlooking the pleasant, rural village of Elmwood.

The sun had long since retired in majestic grandeur to his ocean-bed; and the broad, full-orbed harvest moon was riding in queenly state, 'midst the glittering gems that studded the blue canopy above, silently throwing her peaceful illuminations over a scenery of wild, but surpassing beauty.

The tired and panting horses gained at last the rocky summit; and the coachman's horn rang out clear and shrill, through the still evening air; now reverberating, like a warrior's clarion, through deep ravines and dark vistas of the neighboring woodlands; then dying, and fading away in shad-dowy coppices and moon-lit glades, like the harp's softest vibrations, swept by a summer zephyr.

The solitary occupant of the old vehicle, aroused himself from his half dreamy and pleasant meditations, and his dark eyes flashed, and his cheek glowed with enthusiasm, as with a glance he took in the beauties of the surrounding scene.

Beneath him, bathed in a flood of liquid beauty, lay the quiet rural village of Elmwood. The spire of the plain, unpretending old church of half a century, pointed heavenward, glittering in the clear light of the harvest moon, and like the flaming sword of Eden, it seemed to guard the sacred spot from intrusion and sac-

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rilege. Beneath its venerable shadow, where here and there the moonbeams rested like a halo of glory upon the cold, white marble, many a silver-haired veteran was reposing, after having manfully fought the battles of life, and like the full-eared golden barvest, had been gathered to the rest, and the home of their fathers. There they had peacefully resigned their earthly armor, to be crowned with the laurel of glory in the far-off spirit land.

There, too, beneath the graceful curve of the weeping willow, the village beauty had sought a sweet repose; and there by her side lay a sweet blue-eyed, golden-haired maiden, whose brow was of Parian purity, whose smile was like the sunlight; whose clear, silvery laugh had so oft mingled with the wild bird's song, until the dim old woods seemed bursting with life and music.—Pure, gentle and trusting, her love had been won, and spurned; her little sensitive heart had broken, which ever before seemed overflowing with love and happiness. Then in the golden harvest month they had laid her in the village church-yard, with the seared and withered autumn flowers; and the village pastor wept as he prayed over the uncovered grave, with his head bared to the autumn breeze, which toyed with the silver locks that lay like a glory around his thin temples, and pale, broad brow.

These, and many other associations of childhood flashed over the mental vision of the student youth, as his eye glanced over that peaceful moon-lit scene; for every object that met his gaze was as familiar as household words.

The tall trees now, as erst, were waving in solemn grandure over the peaceful dead, and the autumn breeze was still chanting low, mournful dirges through the withered leaves and dark cypress. And there was the little brook, babbling on over the smooth white pebbles, as musically as ever; the clear calm lake lay like a sheet of polished silver in the bright moonbeams, and—"Here is the old parsonage, Home, sweet Home," he exclaimed, as he bounded lightly from the old vehicle, and pressed his foot once more upon the hallowed precincts of his childhood's home.

He entered the enclosure with a heart throbbing wildly with delight; but his steps were suddenly arrested, as if by some magical influence. A gush of music floated on the night-breeze so soft, rich and melodious, that it seemed to the half-bewildered listener, strains from the spirit-land; and he involuntarily, and half-unconsciously, cast his eyes heavenward to see if some white-winged seraph was not presiding over that scene of bewildering enchantment, with the golden harp blending with the rich pathos of her tones. Voices from the street recalled his thoughts from

their aerial flight, for his only sister was the subject of their conversation.

"She is certainly a proficient in music," said one; "in fact, she excels in that accomplishment as well as in many others.—To Effie Landon nature has been very bountiful of her gifts."

"She is certainly," added his companion, "accomplished, fascinating and beautiful. Aye, beautiful as a poet's vision; and I never can reconcile myself to the idea that such a combination of beauty, grace and worth should be sacrificed at the unholy shrine of infidelity and libertinism; for such I am confident is her artful and treacherous lover, Walter Seymour, who has already won the love, and crushed the hopes and hearts of half a score of beautiful, gentle beings, as virtuous and unsuspecting as Effie Landon. But it was far away from the peaceful and quiet scenes of Elmwood, where, under his assumed name, he feels secure from molestation in aping the gentleman and man of honor."

With a quick, nervous bound, William Landon, (for such was the name of the young student) sprang upon the high wall which separated the street from the pleasant parsonage grounds; but the speakers had passed on, and were already within the shadowy windings of another street.

"Was he dreaming?" He turned his eyes wildly in every direction; there was a quiet beauty in everything that met his vision; in the shimmering of the gaudy foliage, where the moonbeams rested upon the swaying branches of the grand old woods; in the silver sheen of the quiet lake; in the merry babbling of the little brook that meandered so joyously through the little dell, at the foot of the garden walk.

Never before did the quaint old parsonage look so beautiful, half-buried as it seemed in the withering foliage of the climbing vines and graceful elms, that drooped so lovingly over the moss-crowned roof.

"And can it be," he thought, "that a serpent's loathsome coil is hidden within this beautiful Elysium, charming our little birdling from her leafy nest and parent bower?"

He strode impatiently along the gravelled walk, and the next moment stood within the hallowed atmosphere of his childhood's home, receiving the congratulations and blessings of his venerable parents, returning the warm pressure of their hands, and answering a score of inquiries, conjured up by the solicitude of a fond heart.

"And here is our little Effie," said Mrs. Landon, as her daughter sprang like a beautiful fairy into the apartment.

"Ah, indeed! my sister Effie;" he said as his eye glanced upon her beautiful figure, pressing at the same time a warm kiss upon her upturned brow, and winding his arm affectionately around her lithe and fairy-like form; then holding her back, he surveyed her with a look of pride and admiration, forgetting in the wild delirious joy of the meeting the painful fears he had cherished only a moment before.

"Can this be?" he said, as he laid his hand caressingly upon the rich waves of golden hair, which lay like sunbeams over her spotless brow. "Can this be the little Effie that I left with her dolls and toys on the commencement of my collegiate studies?—Here she stands before me now, ere I have taken my first degree, a peerless lady, and I should judge that she had studied something besides dolls and toys, from the enchanting, soul-stirring strains that floated on the night-breeze, from the little parlor window. Indeed, Effie, you are a proficient in music, and even surpass my most sanguine anticipations."

"Yes," said Mrs. Landon, "Effie has improved wonderfully, but I hardly think she deserves to bear away all the honors, for the proficiency she has made. Her very efficient instructor is deserving of as much praise, as her own exertions. He is a very eminent professor of music, with the addition of a liberal education, and the benefit of extensive travel, and all combined render him a perfect gentleman and pleasing companion. I think, my son, you will find him quite an agreeable accession to the society of Elmwood, while you remain at the parsonage."

"Yes, my dear mother; but I beg leave to inform you that your son does not yet aspire to better society than the friends and associates of his childhood in the quiet little village of Elmwood. And were it otherwise, the happiness I derive in the society of my parents and beloved sister, beneath the peaceful shadow of this quaint old home, would compensate me for the absence of a thousand professors of music, and masters of art. But who is this paragon you have been lauding so highly? I presume he prefixes to his noble name some royal title of proud old Spain or sunny Italy; maybe he is some chivalrous knight in disguise, who has already shivered a lance or two in honor of this fascinating little beauty who stands so demurely by my side."

"You are pleased to be facetious, my son, but for your benefit I will inform you that he is neither Don nor knight, but simply Professor Walter Seymour. Do you know him?" she eagerly inquired, as she saw his dark eyes flash and the blood mount quickly to his temples.

"I have not the pleasure of his acquaintance, my dear mother; his name only, I thought was somewhat familiar; but, nevertheless, I presume I shall find him as you suppose, a very interesting companion, and I will render myself agreeable to the guests of my father's house, so that you will have no cause to complain of the deficiency of your son in that respect."

The conversation changed to something of more importance; and Professor Seymour was forgotten, at least, for the remainder of the evening, by all save the young beauty, who, notwithstanding the joy she felt at her brother's return, still could not prevent her thoughts from resting occasionally upon the noble form and brilliant talents of her handsome and graceful lover.

Early the following day Professor Seymour was announced at the parsonage, and introduced to the brother of Effie, whose little heart fluttered with anxiety and pleasure at the first meeting of brother and lover.

William Landon had previously formed an opinion of his professorship which would not have been very flattering to a gentleman of distinction; yet he resolved to study his character and principles with a mind unbiased by prejudice, and to render him justice in the strictest sense of the term. When he was announced at the parsonage, William was glad that an opportunity had occurred thus early, and hastened to greet him with the cordiality of an old acquaintance.

Walter Seymour met the student with the grace of a finished gentleman; and Effie's heart throbbed with delight when she saw the look of pleasure and approbation which her brother bestowed upon her lover.

His tall, commanding form, the ease and grace of every motion, his brilliant talents and sparkling wit, the seeming purity of thought and expression—all seemed to force open the charitable avenues of the student's heart, and demolish, as if by magic, the strong fortifications he had an hour before deemed impregnable, and to the satisfaction of the whole household, they were soon on the best terms imaginable.

Not a day passed that did not find Walter Seymour and William Landon on the alert for some new diversion; sailing, riding or sporting in the grand old forests, or sketching some magnificent scenery: for Seymour was an artist in addition to all his other brilliant acquirements, and not a whit inferior to any in the land.

Thus passed pleasantly and rapidly the autumn days with the two friends; and the student brother even began to look forward

with pleasure to the time when he could congratulate his beautiful and accomplished sister as the envied bride of the noble, talented and handsome Walter Seymour.

## CHAPTER II.

It was on a cold, stormy December evening, that the inmates of the parsonage were seated in the cozy little back-parlor, around a glowing wood fire, congratulating themselves that for this evening, at least, they could enjoy a pleasant tete-a-tete without the interruption of visitors.

The old clergyman had seated himself in his easy chair beside the centre table, with his hand resting upon a little box, elegantly carved and tastefully ornamented with shells and coral.

It immediately excited the curiosity of the younger portion of the family, and when they interrogated their father respecting it, he answered that there was a story connected with it, and this evening he had chosen for a relation of it, as they should be free from interruption, and a better opportunity might not occur while his son remained at the parsonage.

"Eighteen years ago," commenced the clergyman, "while I was preaching in one of the suburban towns of B—, eighteen years ago this very evening, I sat in my pleasant little study after the fatigues of the day, congratulating myself on the comforts that surrounded the dear fireside at home, when I was startled by the violent ringing of the door-bell; and not doubting it was some urgent demand, hastened immediately to answer the summons.

"A lad stood impatiently in the outer hall, and as I advanced, requested me to accompany him to Rosyglade, a pleasant villa a few miles distant from the parsonage, where, he said, a young lady laid at the point of death, and desired to see me. I hesitated not a moment, but hastily throwing on my cloak and mufflers, was soon on my way to Rosyglade, where we arrived in a very short time after leaving the parsonage.

"The boy drew up in front of a neat little cottage, and conducted me into a pleasant sitting room, where he introduced me to the hostess who immediately led the way to the bed-side of the sufferer.

" 'Mr. Landon has arrived,' said Mrs. Goodall, as she tenderly took the ematiated hand of the invalid.

" 'Bless God, then !' she answered in a feeble tone of voice, as she slowly raised her glassy eyes to mine, 'bless God that my prayers have been thus speedily answered. I feared it would be too late sir,' she said, as I seated myself by her side. 'Many and many times,' she continued, 'I have seen God's promises verified, and in my dying moments they do not fail me. He has promised that He would ever be mindful of the widow and fatherless, and sustain us also, if we would cast our burdens upon Him.

" 'A few months since, sir, I was a young, healthy, and happy bride. My husband, Charles Stanly, was an artist of great talent and promise, and life to us seemed nought but sunshine and flowers. We thought not of clouds and tempests, for hope had thrown around us her mystic rainbow hues, and we saw not over life's broad, sunlit ocean, whirlpools yawning to engulf our love-freighted barque.

" 'And even when a fearful epidemic was passing through the city, slaying hundreds and thousands, desolating homes and hearts, making widows childless, and children orphans, without one frail reed on which the delicate tendrils of their heart's love might rest, even then, I felt that the grim tyrant would pass by, unnoticed, our love-lit home, and prayed that he would spare my heart's idol and pass on in his work of death to other victims.

" 'But little he cared for sighs or tears, or prayers, or youth and beauty; for happy bride or silver-haired old age. And so he strode relentlessly into the pleasant studio of my idol Charles, and laid his icy hand upon the leaping pulses of his young heart, and saw with his stony eyes the death-dews gathering fearfully over his ample brow, then passed on, reckless of the heart that was breaking in desolation and sorrow, within that home of death and gloom.

" 'And then, ere the first poignant grief had subsided, they wrested the putrid form of my husband from my agonized embrace, and bore him to the already gloated charnel house.

" 'A few weeks after my husband's death, a paper was accidentally left upon my table, and scarcely knowing what I did, I took it up and cast my eyes mechanically over its pages, without any desire or intention to peruse it.

" 'For several minutes I had sat thus, when my mind was aroused from its almost deathly torpor by seeing a description of a fearful storm at sea; the total wreck of a vessel, and loss of both passengers and crew. This came like a thunderbolt to my

already lacerated heart; for it was the vessel in which my only brother had a few months before embarked.

"It was now indeed I felt the bitterness of my bereavement, and the utter and hopeless desolation of my heart and life.

"In the wide world there was not one with whom my soul could claim kindred.

"Orphaned, widowed and brotherless, I felt that death was the only boon I sought or desired, and so my days were spent in prayers and tears, and hopeless despair.

"There was no kindred heart to whom I could appeal for sympathy or aid. My funds were well nigh exhausted, and I had already disposed of several valuable paintings, the work of my dear Charles, in happier days, and which, for his sake, I was anxious to preserve.

"But I had no alternative; my mind was gloomy and desponding, and I had almost begun to doubt the efficacy of prayer, for I had prayed that the Lord would open a way of escape for me, and verify the sweet promises of his holy word in my behalf.

"One day I had wept and prayed from early dawn till past mid-day, and I felt to exclaim in the language of holy writ, that 'no man cared for my soul.' Oh how my heart yearned in its loneliness and desolation for some kind, sympathetic friend to pour the balm of healing into my bleeding, lacerated heart.

"During the few months that I had resided with my husband in our little home, I had formed but few acquaintances, and many of those were swept away by that fearful devastating epidemic. And in that great metropolis, where thousands of bright beautiful beings were gaily moving through brilliant scenes of pleasure and mirth; there, where the rich man's dome was towering loftily to the skies, and himself rolling in ease and luxury; that city filled with life and animation seemed to me like a vast, gloomy wilderness, and myself a lost and lonely wanderer there.

"As I said before, I had wept and prayed till past mid-day, nor scarce tasted food, so great was the burden of my grief-stricken heart, when the door of my apartment was gently thrown open. A soft hand was laid tenderly upon my tear-drenched cheek, and ere I could throw off the gloomy torpor that shrouded, like a sable pall, my mental vision, she, like a ministering angel, was breathing words of sweet condolence into my ear.

"Those sweet words of love and sympathy, how like electricity they thrilled every nerve and recalled me from the despairing gloom that a moment before seemed to bind me with relentless power.

"Mary,' I said, as I looked up and saw in the sympathizing friend an old acquaintance, whom I had not met before since my happy bridal. 'Mary Goodall,' I again said, as I threw myself weeping into her extended arms; 'may the God of the widow and fatherless reward you an hundred fold for the sunlight your presence has thrown into the midnight darkness of my desolate heart.'

"There,' she said, soothingly, 'don't weep so, my friend.— You are not all alone in this bleak world. If the Lord has shattered your idols, and taken them away from your embrace, he has not utterly forsaken you. There are some kindly hearts yet that will beat in sympathy with your sorrow.

"Think not, my friend, that the Lord has dealt hardly with you, because he has taken your idols from the pains and sorrows of this world to roam amidst the bright Elysian bowers of the spirit land.

"Penetrate the dark cloubs that shroud your mental vision; raise your eyes heavenward, and rather rejoice that they have passed the portals of death and are resting beneath the broad shadow of the Tree of Life, waiting to welcome you to a home where there is no more sorrow, nor sighing, nor tears, nor parting.

"I heard of your bereavement, dear friend, and I have searched for you many a day in this great metropolis, only to return home at night grieved and disappointed. But the Lord has at last directed my footsteps to your desolate abode. May he also forsake me if I leave you here, uncared for in your distress.— Come, my dear friend,' she continued, as she wound her arms affectionately around my neck, 'put on your bonnet and ride with me to my pleasant little home in Rosyglade, and it shall be your home too. You shall never leave it again, until you leave it for a better and happier abode.'

"I did come, sir, and she has been to me a friend indeed, through these long weeks of suffering; she has been to me like the good Samaritan. But, sir, she could not heal the heart's wound—she could not dispel the sorrow that gathered around me like a sable pall; and when the first low wail of this helpless, fatherless infant broke upon my ear, vainly, then, did she try to recall me to life and happiness. But my heart was broken, sir, long ere she came, with her feeble wails and angel smiles to waken within a mother's breast a mother's sympathy.

"For this lone child I would live, but life closes darkly

around me; in my youthful days, I am stepping from the stage of action. This is the last tie that binds me to earth.

"Sir, you are a servant of the Most High God, and I trust, a faithful servant, will you obey this divine injunction, by being a friend to the widow and the fatherless? Will you adopt this child that can claim no kindred in the wide world, and give it a place in your home and heart—be unto it a father, as to your own? And Oh, may she never know sorrow such as has been her mother's lot!"

"I promised her I would take her child, and while I lived it should be unto me as my own. She grasped my hand—her lips moved, but could not utter the emotions of gratitude that overflowed her heart, still her eyes, filling with tears, told volumes of the unuttered language of the heart. When her emotions had somewhat subsided, she said—

"Heaven will reward the faithful, and 'as ye do it to one of the least of these, ye do it unto me.'" And here is another little treasure," she said, laying her thin, white hand upon this box, "that I would entrust to your keeping, for the benefit of my child, in maturer years. It contains a few of my bridal ornaments, some keepsakes which have been valuable to me, and the portraits of my husband and brother, and also of myself, as I was ere sorrow and disease had broken my heart. They were all painted by my husband, a short time before my brother left us. Ah! little did we think then of the sad change that would so soon overtake us!"

"Here," said the clergyman, lifting the cover of the box, as he paused in his narration, "here are the portraits she wished me to preserve for her child."

William and Effie, who had been anxiously listening to the narration, bent their eyes eagerly upon them.

"Beautiful! beautiful!" they both exclaimed, as their eyes rested upon the handsome, noble features of Charles Stanley.

"Did you ever see anything speak more plainly of genius and a noble mind than that ample brow and full, dark, flashing eye?"

"And look," said Effie, "how handsomely the dark curling hair is thrown back from the white temples; his lips curl slightly with pride and dignity, and his whole bearing is that of a sovereign. And, brother," she continued, glancing at that of the lady, "did you ever see anything half so beautiful, except in dreams and romance?"

"See! the heavenly light of those soft liquid eyes, blue as the azure of a summer's sky; and that cloud of golden curls

falling with such careless grace over the dazzling white of that brow and neck.

"Was she not a fitting bride for such an artist? beautiful as his wildest dreams could trace upon the glowing canvas? O! tell me, brother, did you ever see anything half so beautiful?"

William bent his eyes with a look of bewildering uncertainty upon his sister, as he held the portrait nearer to the light.

"I think I have," he answered, "for if I am not very much mistaken, it is a perfect likeness of my sister Effie, as she sits before me this evening. Can this be the work of Walter Seymour, and are you playing upon me a bit of pleasantry this evening, Effie? But, sister, I did not suppose that Seymour was half so skilled with the palette and brush."

"What are you talking about, brother mine?" inquired Effie, regarding him with astonishment.

"Why, simply, Effie, that this is your portrait, and perfectly has the artist performed his work. See that wealth of golden hair laying in waves of sunlight over that Parian brow. See how daintily that finely moulded head is poised over those dimpled shoulders; and the swan-like neck arching with such peerless grace. It is all very beautifully and truthfully executed. Do, I pray you, enlighten me a little, my dear father; was it not taken expressly for sister Effie?"

"It was not, my son, taken expressly for Effie, but it was taken for her mother, a sweet, beautiful creature as ever lay beneath the clods of the valley."

"For my mother?" asked Effie, falling upon her knees beside the venerable pastor. "For my mother? O! tell me again; are you not my father, and is she not (pointing to Mrs. Landon) my own dear, good mother? and William,—oh, yes—you are my brother, with whom I have been reared from infancy—who has loved me and cared for me, as only a brother could."

"You are our child, Effie, and we love you with all the fondness of parental hearts; but you are ours by adoption only, for the mother that gave you being was the one whose history I have been relating this evening."

Effie's head fell upon the knees of her foster-father, and the golden tresses lay in thick, shining masses on her snowy temples, glittering with the gems that fell like a crystal shower from the long, heavy lashes that shaded the deep azure eyes, now filled with the first gushings of sorrow that her young and sensitive heart had ever known.

The old pastor, scarcely less affected, laid his hand caressingly upon the soft curls, as he said—

“You are none the less dear to us now, Effie, and she was worthy to be the mother of such a child. It was only in compliance with her dying injunction that I have revealed to you the secret of your birth; to all the world it is still a secret; and may, if you desire it, ever remain so. But your true parents were as noble and honorable as any in the land. Had your father lived, he would no doubt have gained a lofty eminence on the pinnacle of fame.”

“Were they indeed my parents?” she inquired again, as she raised her tearful eyes to those of her father. “Oh, then tell me more of them; of that dying, angel mother. How faithfully have you executed the trust she reposed in you! How can I ever repay this act of kindness and benevolence, my dear, dear parents?”

“We are daily repaid, my daughter, by the light and smiles, the joy and gladness, that you bring to our hearts; and doubly rewarded by the assurance that your sainted mother looks down from her spirit-home, with love and approbation, upon our household scenes.”

“Did my mother die that night, while you were at Rosyglade cottage?” inquired Effie, with tearful anxiety.

“No, my child, she lived nearly a week after my first visit.”

### CHAPTER III.

“One morning,” continued the parson, “I rode earlier than usual to the cottage. Mrs. Goodall met me at the door; she was weeping, and when I accosted her, she told me she was glad that I had come, for she feared that dear Effie was dying.”

“I hastened to her bedside, and, oh! I never shall forget that sweet, holy, and radiant smile which overspread her beautiful features as she tried to raise her palsied hand to mine, saying—

“‘I am going home now, sir, and oh! if you could only see the glorious sight that meets my spiritual vision, it would repay you for a life-time of sorrow and afflictions. Can you not see that holy, blood-washed throng, arrayed in robes of spotless white, with their dazzling crowns and harps of gold; and the strains of rich music, wafted by heavenly breezes to my dying ear; do they

not thrill every fibre of your heart? And there they are, parents and husband, descending upon a pure white cloud, to bear me hence to the happy spirit-land.”

“‘My child! my child! shield her from the storms and temptations of an evil world; point her to Calvary! Farewell, farewell! Charles—dear—Charles—I—come—.”

“Exhausted, she sank back upon the pillow—her eyes closed, but her lips moved as though in prayer. Tears glistened beneath her long eye-lashes, and then another radiant smile overspread her marble features, and she sank quietly into a long and dreamless repose.

“You were nestling in happy unconsciousness upon her pulseless bosom, when I removed you to a stranger’s home, and another’s love and care. I performed the solemn funeral rites, and erected a plain white stone at the head of her grave, in the little rural cemetery near Rosyglade.

“The ensuing Spring I was called to preside over the church in this pleasant village, and have never since found it convenient to visit Rosyglade.”

Effie, overpowered by her emotions, knelt reverently at the feet of the gray-haired divine, and struggling with the tears that almost choked her utterance, she invoked the blessings of a high and holy heaven upon those who had fostered her in her helpless orphanage.

It was an interesting group—that which knelt that evening, around the altar of prayer, beneath the old parsonage roof, listening with wrapt devotion, to the words of inspiration which fell like gems from the lips of the silver-haired pastor. His face was radiant with sublime and holy thoughts, and the deep rich pathos of his voice, as it rose earnestly in prayer to the great I AM, binding like a spell, the hearts of his auditors, till they wept from the fullness of their heart’s emotion.

The little box and all it contained, was presented to Effie on her eighteenth birth-night, with the blessing of her foster-father, as he laid his trembling hand caressingly upon her throbbing brow.

“Effie,” he said, “as though you were my own child, I invoke the richest blessings of heaven upon you now and ever. You have always been as dear to us as if you were indeed our own. In after years, when you go out from this humble roof to gladden the fireside of another, when the pure gushing love of your young and trusting heart is given to another, should you ever find that trust betrayed, your golden hopes crushed,

your pure love spurned and repulsed; then like the weary, wandering dove fly to the parent bower. Here in our home and hearts, you will ever find a welcome that our envious world can never wrest from you. Long may it be, little Effie, ere you leave the home of your childhood for a stranger's love."

The next day Effie sat alone in the pleasant study, busily engaged in examining the contents of the little box, the gift of a dying mother.

Here was the little pearl necklace that had graced the white bosom of the bride, throbbing so wildly with delicious hopes and bright anticipations.

Here the modest bandeau of orange-flowers which had nestled so lovingly amidst the shining tresses which lay like a golden shadow upon the full, snowy temples and rose tinted cheek.

And here the ring which had encircled with such becoming grace the white, taper finger of the blushing bride.

There was a lock of dark, shining hair, tastefully interwoven with the golden hues of a bright, wavy, curling tress, and many fanciful billet-doux which had been to the lovers interchanges of confidence and truth.

There were several finely-executed paintings of scenes, wild, beautiful, and sublime, bespeaking for the artist a genius of high and masterly power.

Effie examined and admired them all; then again taking in her hand the almost speaking likenesses, she sat abstractly and tearfully over them, and heard not the stealthy approach of an intruder. Her thoughts were far away in that youthful artist's studio, and she saw him bending gracefully over the canvas, tracing upon its surface the life-like beings produced by his glowing inspiration.

And by his side sat his young and beautiful bride, her finely-chiseled features glowing with smiles and blushes, and a cloud of golden tresses sweeping gracefully over the canvas, upon the half-finished coloring of a masterly design. It was a scene varied and life-like which passed like a panorama over the mental vision of Effie Landon, as she sat with her fair brow resting upon one dimpled hand, and her large blue eyes bent mournfully upon the handsome features of her sainted parents.

It was a scene beautiful at first, as a poet's vision, a sky, calm, cloudless, and serene, with the golden sunlight of youth and vigor, hope, fame, honor, and glory, all rising gradually and gloriously above the rose tinted horizon. Then, a gossa-

mer cloud floated upon a soft whispering zephyr through the clear blue ether; another, and another followed in rapid succession until the bright rays of the sun were shrouded in darkness and gloom.

And the wild, fearful tornado swept relentlessly over the earth, desolating the hearts and homes of the rich and poor, the high and low. It swept recklessly on, nor staid its desolating strides for the tottering steps or flowing locks of silver-haired age, nor the light, gushing song, or light footsteps of youth and beauty. On and away it passed, leaving nought behind it but ruin and desolation.

Again the sunlight peered gloriously out from the heavy folds of the sable curtain, and looked smilingly upon that scene of ruin. Homes were desolate where wealth had lavished her choicest favors—hearts were bleeding that never before had vibrated to the touch of sorrow or despair. And the artist's studio, how quickly that bright, beautiful vision had passed away and all that remained of that sunlit scene was the little wreck she held before her.

"Oh! can it be?" she half audibly exclaimed, her eyes filling with tears, "that I am their child—their only child—with none in the wide world with whom I can claim kindred?"

"What in the name of all that is wonderful and sublime is the complicated problem your crazy brain is trying to solve now my little Effie?" inquired Walter Seymour, who had stood gazing in astonishment at the tears which had fallen from the drooping lashes of his laughing beauty. "Here I have been standing, full fifteen minutes, wondering whether you were dreaming, or under the influence of some other fancy."

Effie started in confusion, at the voice of an intruder, and hastily replacing her treasure in the little repository, she arose with an air of embarrassment to greet him, and make some apology for her absence of mind.

"I was not aware, Effie," continued Seymour, taking her hand, and speaking somewhat hastily, "that you made a practice of weeping over the portraits of handsome gentlemen.—May-be," he added, sarcastically, "they are some favorite knights of other days, or—"

"Oh—no—no!" said Effie, with evident confusion, "not that; they are—they are—" she hesitated, for she had not thought whether it were best to inform him of the mystery of her parentage at present, or otherwise.

But a peculiar glance from his dark, flashing eyes, determin-

ed her to solve the riddle to him at once, let the result be what it might.

"It is better it should be thus," she thought. So she took the little box in her hand, and seated herself by his side. She showed him the portraits, and told him all that had been communicated to her the previous evening by her foster-father.

"Very romantic—very," he said, as Effie concluded her touching story, and his eyes were bent with a half scornful, half lover-like expression upon the beautiful creature by his side.

Effie started at his light and careless manner of expression, but she saw not the flashing of his dark eye, for the long heavy lashes were vainly striving to press back the scalding tears that fell like glittering gems over her blushing cheek.

Seymour hastened his departure, and in taking leave, he coldly announced to Effie his intention of leaving Elmwood for the present.

"Going to leave us?" asked Effie, with unfeigned surprise. "I thought you intended to spend at least the winter at Elmwood; we shall be so lonely, for brother leaves us too, in a few days. We shall miss you much—very much."

"Ay, but you know that my business is rather dull here, at present, and I think it is time to be seeking some permanent place that I can call 'home,'" he said, looking archly at her.

"You shall hear from me soon," he continued, as he took her hand and raised it to his lips. He felt it slightly tremble, and her large azure eyes were dewy with unshed tears.

But he only smiled gaily and hastened to pay his adieu to the family, who were equally surprised at his sudden departure. Nevertheless, they gave him a kindly, cordial grasp and wished him prosperity and happiness in his absence, and a safe and speedy return.

After Seymour's abrupt departure, Effie sought her own apartment, and gave vent to her over-wrought feelings in a gush of bitter tears. There was a presentiment of coming evil arising in her heart, which neither the smiles of her lover, nor her own tears could efface. But then she crushed it all back into her heart and performed her duties with a smiling, careless grace, and none suspected that a doubt of her lover's fidelity had ever entered her mind.

After William's departure from his own "Sweet Home," everything assumed its usual quiet, peaceful way at the Parsonage, and Effie had sufficient leisure to weep over the beautiful

semblances of her sainted parents and to weave the future, with its clouds and sunshine, its hopes and fears, in a web of dreamy romance.

Here, for the present we will leave her, safe beneath the parental roof, and follow in our next chapter the fortunes of William, as he journeys from his childhood's home to resume his studies in the pleasant village of W—.

#### CHAPTER IV.

It was late in the afternoon of the third day, since leaving Elmwood, that our youthful student saw with delight the tall spires of W— in the distance, glittering in the fading rays of the setting sun. And never were the misty hill-tops of home-land more welcome to the weary, worn mariner, than were the spires and domes of W— to the tired and lonely student.

Three years of his happy life had already been spent beneath those classic shades. And there he had met and loved one, beautiful as an angel to the eyes of the student youth. He had bowed before her charms entranced, and offered to her the love and devotion of his heart.

And she—the proud, gifted, and peerless creature that she was, who had turned away coldly from many a kneeling suppliant, accepted the proffered love of our handsome student, and plighted to him her heart and hand in return.

Cordial greetings and kindly congratulations met him on every hand, as the lumbering coach drew up in front of his former residence, and the pleasant smiling face of the little hostess appeared in good time with the silver tea-bell, to welcome him back and invite him, as usual, to partake of the excellent supper she had prepared.

After young Landon had refreshed himself with a fragrant cup of tea, and dressed himself with scrupulous care, he hastened with all a lover's impatience to the residence of his bride elect.

The brilliant light from the rich chandelier was streaming through the crimson folds of silken damask which hung in graceful festoons from the high parlor windows, as Landon sprang lightly over the marble steps, and laid his hand impatiently upon the silver knob.

"Is Miss Aubrey at home?" he inquired of a strange attendant, who answered his summons at the door.

She replied in the affirmative, but added that she was engaged for the moment, and invited him to a seat in the back parlor to await her leisure. He followed the domestic, and had just taken a seat within the shadow of a screen, when a familiar voice arrested his attention and caused him to turn his eyes in the direction whence it proceeded. The folding doors were slightly ajar, and he could plainly see his beautiful affianced gracefully reclining upon a luxurious sofa, while a handsome and noble-looking gentleman was regarding her with looks of love and admiration.

"It was a mere flirtation—nothing more, sir, I can assure you," he heard her say in answer to some remark of the gentleman. "William Landon is handsome and gifted, with the figure and bearing of an Emperor; but after all, he is only the son of a country parson, and is himself preparing for ministerial orders. I can assure you, sir, I have no desire nor inclination for such an honorable and brilliant position," and the laugh that followed this little tirade resembled the soft tinkling of silver bells.

"But," said the gentleman, "they tell me that young Landon has few equals in beauty, talents, and every noble and manly accomplishment, and I would not be the one to step in between him and his heart's love."

Landon heard no more, for his cheek was ashy pale and his dark eyes glowed with a light that never before had gleamed there. He groped his way with difficulty to the hall-door, and fell almost insensible upon the marble steps. The cold air somewhat revived him, and he arose and strode wildly and haughtily over the gravelled walk.

"Perfidious woman!" he exclaimed, as he pressed his hands nervously to his throbbing temples. "Would that I had never seen thee, or rather, that I had heeded the admonitions of my wiser classmates. Beautiful as an angel, but a vain, fickle, heartless coquette. Wo to him who is charmed within the circle of thy blighting influence."

Landon walked rapidly along the street, scarcely knowing whither he was going, until he had passed far beyond the village boundary. The bracing air of an Autumn evening had cooled his fevered brow, and his mind had regained somewhat of its wonted calmness, when he again retraced his steps towards the aristocratic abode of the beautiful and fascinating Clara Aubrey.

As he was passing the high, arched gateway which led up to Aubrey House, he recognized by the light of the street lamp, the same noble looking gentleman he had seen an hour previous, walking hurriedly along the garden walk. He passed the arched gateway, and the next moment was confronting the wild and frenzied looks of William Landon.

"Start not, my friend," said Landon, as the gentleman drew back with a gesture of surprise. "An hour since, I saw you in the company of the beautiful Clara Aubrey. I was a listener—but not designedly so—to some of the conversation that passed between you; and oh, sir, it maddened me; I flew like a maniac from that princely home, and its blighting atmosphere. And I have lived a life-time of agony since."

"If," said the gentleman, "I have been so unfortunate as to cause you one particle of this wild, extravagant sorrow, I would willingly make any reparation in my power."

"No, no, my dear sir," said Landon, "not you,—it was not you. My name is Landon, and she, that heartless beauty, was my affianced bride."

"Ah, indeed!" said the gentleman, while his handsome and expressive features glowed with the liveliest sympathy.

"Now I begin to comprehend. Please to accept the support of my arm, for you are pale and trembling. Do me the favor to accompany me to my hotel, and there, after you have taken a cordial to revive you, and which you very much need, we will understand each other better."

## CHAPTER V.

"Pray tell me, my friend," said Landon, as he threw himself restlessly into a luxurious easy chair, when they had gained the apartments his friend occupied at the hotel. "Tell me when and how you became acquainted with Clara Aubrey, the beautiful and fascinating belle of W——."

"Two months since," replied the gentleman, with noble frankness, "I met her for the first time, at a military ball in the city of P——. It was a gay and brilliant assemblage.—Plumes were nodding and diamonds sparkling in the gorgeous light of costly chandeliers. Dark eyes were flashing beneath long, silken lashes; cheeks were glowing with youth and beauty; fairy forms were moving through the dizzy mazes of the

dance; and strains of soft, rich music floated from the coral lips of beauty, until the senses were well nigh intoxicated with the enchanting scene.

"In all that assemblage of youth, beauty and fascination, there was none who captivated the eyes and hearts of all, like the peerless queen of beauty, Clara Aubrey. Murmurs of admiration rang through that gay assemblage, as she moved like a fairy enchantress in the magical scene. Bright eyes flashed with admiration, brave hearts throbbed wildly with unuttered emotions, and many a noble and gallant youth bowed hopelessly at the shrine of her rare and dazzling beauty.

"Almost imperceptibly I was drawn within the circle of her enchanting wand. I bowed to the magic of her charms in the wild delirium of the moment and became her accepted lover. I will not attempt to describe to you the ecstasy of that hour of triumph, in being the accepted suitor of the most angelic creature that ever gladdened my vision, for your own heart, no doubt, throbbed with the same wild delight when she pledged to you her vows of fidelity, and you vainly thought that the beautiful casket contained a gem; that the peerless queen of beauty was at least in possession of a heart.

"Intoxicated with the power of her charms, I followed her to W— ere she had absented herself one week from the gay scenes of city life. There I met by accident an old acquaintance, who, by the way, is a classmate and friend of yours. To him I communicated my intentions, and added that I had come for the purpose of bearing away the beautiful belle of W—, to grace the sunny bowers of my far-off southern home. He looked at me incredulously.

" 'Ah! I see how it is,' I said gaily, as I met his inquiring glance. 'But I am in earnest, my friend. Am I not fortunate?'

"Surprise took the place of credulity, as he said—'Have you, too, become her dupe? My friend, she is as heartless as she is beautiful. Besides, she is engaged to William Landon, a gentleman who has few equals in beauty, talents and education.'

"He then gave me a description of her fascinating and heartless career, which changed exceedingly the glowing imagery of my love's first dream. And her assertions to me, that it was a mere flirtation, did not satisfy me. I resolved to make no farther advances until your return to W—, and then to learn from your own lips the truthfulness of the case; for, believe me, friend Landon, I would sooner take a viper to my bosom, than one of broken vows."

"But still," said Landon, "you have not yet loved as I have loved. I have worshiped at the shrine of her beauty with idolatrous devotion; with all the wild, extravagant delight of youth's first love. I dreamed not of deception, nor that my beautiful idol would ever descend from the lofty pedestal upon which I had placed her, as mistress supreme of my heart.—No, no, my friend," he continued, his eyes resting wildly upon the proud form and animated features of his companion, "your heart is not utterly and hopelessly crushed. The dazzling sunlight of your youthful days is not forever shrouded in the darkness and gloom of utter despair."

"But, my friend," said Frank Sutherland, as he laid his hand soothingly upon his throbbing temples, "do not yield to such extravagant grief; you may yet hope; you are fearfully excited and need rest. Compose yourself for the night, my friend, and on the morrow I will accompany you to the home of Clara Aubrey, and I trust all will yet be well. Let me accompany you to your residence," he continued, taking the trembling hand of Landon within his own, as he arose to depart.

"No, no, I will not trouble you so much," said Landon, "I am better now," and he made an attempt to gain the door. But his cheek grew ashy white, the lids drooped heavily over the wild, flashing light of his dark eyes, and he sank back fainting and powerless in the chair.

Sutherland Speedily rang for assistance, and they laid him on a couch and applied every available restorative; but it was long ere they succeeded in bringing him back to consciousness, and when they did, it was only to see him raving in the wild delirium of fever.

A physician was summoned, who pronounced it a disease of the brain, and ordered that he should be kept perfectly quiet. Sutherland kindly took upon himself the responsibility of attending him, and he watched over him with all the solicitude of an affectionate brother. And he could not think that one who could trifle with the love of a noble heart would escape the just retribution of a pure and holy God. As he bent over him, listening to the wild exclamations of a frenzied brain, his heart throbbed as never before with thankfulness that his footsteps had been arrested, ere he was hopelessly crushed by Clara Aubrey's power.

Several days young Landon lay in the delirium of fever, insensible to everything that passed around him, but raving incessantly of the beautiful belle, of his blighted love and utter despair.

At length he fell into a long, quiet and refreshing slumber, and when he awoke, the fever and insanity were gone, but he was pale, weak, and helpless as an infant. Sutherland was bending tenderly over him when he awoke, and a tear gushed up from his generous heart and fell upon the broad, pale brow of the sufferer. He looked up, and a smile played over his manly features, as he gently pressed the hand of the noble Sutherland, and murmured—

“God bless you, my friend!”

Sutherland forbade any further exertion, and he lay there, passive as a weary child, quiet and calm, but it was only the fearful calmness of despair. Sutherland had not visited the belle of W—— since the night of his introduction to the reader, for he had never left the bedside of her injured victim, and not until Landon was able to leave his couch did he find it convenient to visit one who had so ruthlessly and heartlessly deceived. And when he did visit her it was only to intercede for his friend, and to bid her a formal and final farewell.

Great was her mortification to learn of Landon's return, but greater to feel that all her arts and fascinations had failed to secure the handsome and noble millionaire. She immediately made arrangements to leave W——, and within three days after Sutherland had bade her farewell she had taken passage for New York, without deigning to send a note or word to the unfortunate sufferer she was coldly leaving to his hopeless sorrow.

Landon still remained pale, feeble, and spiritless, and the physician recommended travel and change of scene, as the last and only remedy that would avail in restoring him to health. Sutherland was of the same opinion, and proposed to Landon a trip with him upon the broad Atlantic, and then a tour through Europe.

“I am vastly rich,” said Sutherland, with none in the wide world to share it with me; and my friend,” he continued, as he took the pale, thin hand of Landon, “I am in need of just such a friend and companion as you would be. My purse is at your disposal, and nothing remains to be obtained but your consent. I have long been desirous of visiting the wonders of the old world, and have been detained only by the want of a companion in whom I could safely confide.”

Landon hardly knew how to answer his friend. Indeed, he felt if there had been no other obstacle in the way that he could not command energy and decision sufficient to make the

necessary arrangements for such a journey. But he still remained languid and spiritless, and at last reluctantly yielded to the solicitations of his friend, provided his father yielded a willing consent.

Accordingly, Sutherland forwarded a communication to his father, informing him of the illness of his son, and requesting permission for him to travel, as he was wholly unfitted for study. He mentioned nothing of the cause of his illness, and so the kind old father attributed it to too close application to study, freely gave his consent, and even insisted on his availing himself of so good an opportunity to make himself familiar with the wonders of his fatherland.

Many affectionate and encouraging messages accompanied this from his dear mother and light-hearted sister Effie, in his far-off childhood's home.

It was a bright, balmy morning in early Spring-time, on which William Landon first paced the deck of a noble ship, with her white sails unfurled and quivering in the cool, fresh breezes, with all the impatience of a fettered war-horse, to commence her journey over the broad trackless ocean, and when the cables were loosed, she swayed, plunged, and then went leaping and dashing over the sparkling waves with all the graceful agility of the sea-bird's swoop.

William Landon stood, pale and motionless as a spectre, with his eyes intently fixed on the receding heights of his own dear native land, and when the last object was lost in the far-off misty distance, a tear-drop gathered in his eyes, and he leaned sadly and moodily over the railing, and buried his face in his thin, white hands.

Sutherland was instantly by his side, trying to direct his mind from its gloom, and pointing out to him the varied beauties, the grandeur and sublimity of the deep, deep sea.

Not a cloud floated over the surface of the clear blue sky, to mar its beauty, or dim the brilliancy of the sunlight, which lay like a glory around them, and far, far away, on the bosom of the sea, it sparkled like gems upon each floating wave, wreathing in bright, fantastic hues the gossamer spray that danced lightly on the murmuring tide.

Landon was not insensible to the beauty and grandeur spread out so lavishly around him, for he had ever been an enthusiastic worshipper of all the grand, sublime, and varied beauties of Nature, and while his eyes surveyed in admiration the scene his heart was well-nigh breaking with unutterable emotions.

Days and weeks passed by, and the ocean breezes had imparted life and vigor to his weak and wasted limbs, and tinged slightly the pale, wan cheek with a glow of health and animation. But the heart's wound, yet lay bare and chafing, fresh and bleeding in every pore.

At length the frowning battlements of castles and towers in Britain's sunny isle greeted his longing vision, and smiled a welcome to the weary and unhappy wanderer. And here we will leave him to court forgetfulness in ruined halls and crumbling towers, and hasten back to our own dear native land.

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#### CHAPTER VI.

The quaint old parsonage—let us again turn our steps thither, and rest awhile beneath the shadow of those graceful elms that droop so lovingly over the moss-crowned roof.

It is autumn—the golden harvest month, and the clear, glad songs of the reaper come floating on the evening breeze, as he hies him to his own loved home, bearing the golden sheaves that have crowned his patient toil.

Far away o'er the western hills, the broad, red sun is sinking to repose beneath the rich drapery that hangs in gorgeous festoons from the blue canopy above, throwing a halo of beauty over hill and dale.

From the deep, sombre recesses of the grove, come the clear, rich strains of the night-bird, imparting a peaceful delight to the weary, and filling the still evening air with melody. The shadows of evening are gathering quietly around this magic scene. Let us enter the home that the good man's prayers have long ago consecrated until the very footfall seems a sacrilege.

Step reverently, for a mighty conqueror is even now waiting for admission, bearing a message from the Lord of hosts. Step softly, for holy angels are bending over the couch of the dying pastor, chanting the strains of the new Jerusalem; binding upon his ample brow, already glowing with a holy radiance, the crown of the faithful and the redeemed. Step lightly, for loved ones are kneeling by the sick man's couch, and the gushing tears of heart-felt sorrow are falling unchecked upon the snowy drapery. Bleeding hearts are offering up their silent

and fervent invocations to heaven's throne. Oh! it is a holy place—just on the verge of the spirit-land, and every breath seems wafted from elysian bowers. Step aside, for the grim messenger approaches. He heeds not the prayers, the tears, the sighs, nor the beseeching look of love. He cares not for the vacant chair, the deserted hearth, the bleeding hearts, the widow's prayers, the orphan's tears. He lays his icy hand upon that ample brow already crowned with a halo of glory.—He shuts out from his vision the dear familiar objects of home, and opens to his wondering view the dazzling glory of the spirit-world, with the great white throne, the Lamb, and the blood-washed throng; the immaculate robes, the palms, the crowns, the harps of gold, the tree of life, bending beneath delicious fruit. The golden gates are unfurled and he sees streets of pearl; placid rivers, smooth as polished silver; and hears, far, far away, strains of seraph-harp and lyre.

Thus quietly and peacefully passed away the faithful servant of his Master and people. Hushed was the voice that had so often chained the hearts of his listeners by his glowing eloquence, or made the quick pulses leap with joy, at the deep, rich pathos of thought and expression. The warm smile was chilled upon his lips. The hands were clasped peacefully over the rigid breast, the white drapery folded gracefully over the marble features, and all that was of "earth earthy," was given back to corruption.

Solemnly tolled the funeral bell from the village church, as they bore their beloved pastor and father to his silent resting-place, in the little church-yard where he had so often wept and prayed over uncovered graves, and soothingly poured upon the mourners' hearts the balm of hope and consolation. Slowly and reverently his little flock followed in the rear, draped in badges of mourning, and many an eye swollen with weeping, told how sincere and heart-felt was their sorrow.

They lingered by the grave as though they were reluctant even there to part with one whose memory was so fondly endeared to their hearts; and as a token of their sincerity, they erected a white marble monument to his memory, and when Spring returned, encircled it with the choicest shrubs and flowers, and the drooping weeping willow.

Calmly and meekly the bereaved widow bowed to the smiting rod. No murmur escaped her lips, no tears bedewed her eyes; but the shaft had pierced deeply the heart, and it lay bruised, bleeding, and silent.

Her lips, pale as the hue of death, quivered when a deeper shade of sadness rested upon her wasted cheek, but she murmured not, for she knew that ere long they—the husband and wife—would be reunited in heaven.

But William and Effie—how anxiously her thoughts and sympathies turned to them as her cheek grew pale and her slight form more ethereal. William was an invalid, far away in a foreign clime, a stranger, and perhaps even then dying in a stranger's home. And Effie, twice orphaned, and her heart breaking with hope deferred, even now.

A mother's solicitude had divined this, although not a word had ever fallen from the lips of her child; but she had heard the half-suppressed sighs, she had seen the long, silken lashes heavily drooping over the soft eyes, red and swollen with weeping, as if striving to conceal the traces of tears; she had seen her cheek pale day after day, and her songs were hushed, save only a few plaintive ditties that expressed her heart's sorrows. And Oh! she was so changed from the laughing, joyous creature that a few months previous had moved like a fairy enchantress through hall and bower. It could not be that the death of her foster-father had wrought all this sad change.

Walter Seymour had visited the parsonage but once since his first departure from Elmwood, and his letters had been few and far between, until they had ceased altogether, with the information that he should soon visit the parsonage, for the purpose of bearing away the flower of Elmwood as the pride of his heart to be the pride of his home.

But that was long before the kind old parson had departed from their midst, and Effie had hoped on until hope had become a mockery.

#### CHAPTER VII.

It was a lovely evening in the month of May, and Effie sauntered forth alone to inhale the balmy air that passed in whispering zephyrs through bowers and glades of fragrant bloom. She passed through the quiet, pleasant streets, and wandered abstractedly towards the little rural cemetery where the form of her father was peacefully reposing.

The bursting blossoms were throwing their fragrance around his silent resting place, and flinging their white petals like glit-

tering gems on the green sward that encircled the snowy monument erected to his memory.

Effie knelt upon the snowy slab that covered the pulseless heart of her dear foster-father, and prayed and wept until the dim shadows of evening had thrown her sober mantle over the hushed bosom of the earth. Effie felt herself doubly orphaned, as her tear wet cheek pressed the cold marble that towered above her father's grave. And her mother—she was pining day by day, and she felt that ere the flowers that were sending forth their fragrance upon the evening air, had faded from that sacred enclosure, she too, who had watched over her childhood, and guarded her later years, would be peacefully reposing beneath them. And her brother—the invalid who was far away in the sunny haunts of a foreign clime, in pursuit of health, might there fill a stranger's grave. Then where would the orphan's heart turn for sympathy—where would Effie Landon find a friend who would bestow upon her the love and protection that she had ever found beneath the quaint old parsonage? Her thoughts turned to Walter Seymour, and to the happy days when she gave her heart's first offering all trustingly to his keeping.

She bowed her head until her cheek pressed the cold marble slab and her rich curls, heavy with the sparkling night dew, lay like tissues of gold upon the polished surface of the monument. And then she lived over again the happy past, when she had listened to his glowing eloquence with wrapt delight or sat dreamily beneath the enchanting melody of his voice and song. Or when her little heart had throbbed wildly with new-fledged hopes and fears, as he pressed upon her blushing cheek the seal of his love. And then, Oh! how sadly her thoughts reverted to the weary days and weeks and months of his absence; the cold and hurried phrases of his long expected communications. And then darker and heavier fell the clouds over her mental vision, shrouding it from the world without and all save him, who had won and trifled with the first, gushing love of her young heart.

The full-orbed moon had risen far above the woodland lights and was throwing a hallowed radiance over the quiet scenes of Elmwood, when she awoke from her reverie, and turned her steps hurriedly towards the cypress shaded walk which led to her dear, old home. She had left the sacred enclosure, where beneath the placid moonbeams and shadowy cypress the dead were peacefully slumbering, and gained the

quiet village road, when she heard stealthy footsteps approaching, and quickly turning with fear and apprehension, she saw a man rapidly approaching.

Her heart beat quickly as she measured the distance to her home, and she bounded lightly, and nervously over the soft, green sward, hoping thus by her agility to elude him. She had gained in safety the little dell, shaded by a maple grove, and when she had cleared that, and gained the summit of the little eminence beyond, she would be safe within the precincts of the village.

Delusive hope! Ere she had passed from beneath the shadowy branches of the maples, a hand was laid lightly but firmly upon her shoulder and a voice strangely familiar, softly pronounced her name.

Half fainting with terror, she turned quickly, confronting the intruder, who immediately removed his disguise and revealed to the vision of the affrighted girl, the bland and handsome features of Walter Seymour.

A mist gathered over her eyes and her head swam dizzily, but pride and indignation came to her aid, and with all the dignity of an injured queen, she demanded the cause of such clandestine manœuvring.

"You shall not wait long for an answer, idol of my soul," said Seymour, in his blandest tone. "I have come to claim you now in virtue of the vows we pledged to each other, long ago, in the sanctity of your quiet home, when you were the flower and pride of Elmwood; when all believed you the legitimate and only daughter of the Rev. Mr. Landon. But a foundling with whom no one claims relationship, unknown.—Pshaw, that makes all the difference in the world, in the prospects of a husband. But your beauty—and accomplishments have charmed me, and if you will be content to share my love and my purse, they shall be yours; but my hand Effie, that I have pledged to an heiress, the only daughter of a millionaire. Nay, start not, little beauty, with such looks of terror. You shall reign mistress supreme of my heart and love. Servants shall come at your bidding, and the wealth of a queen shall be lavished at your feet."

"Unhand me, monster! Villain!" said Effie, in a voice scarcely audible from indignation and terror, as he wound his arm firmly around her trembling form.

"And why should I, my little queen? Have you not long ago pledged to me your love? Then fly with me miles away,

to the abode of elegance and wealth I have prepared, and leave the home, desolated by thy father's death, where nought, perhaps, but poverty and toil await you."

"Perfidious wretch!" she exclaimed as the full purport of his words fell like a leaden weight upon her pure, sensitive ear. "Unhand me, or I will call assistance to my aid, and expose you, villain that you are, as you deserve."

"You do not know me," he answered blandly. "If you suppose I would readily relinquish the prize I have so long sought, and which fortune has at last so unexpectedly thrown in my way. See," he said, as he hastily drew a thick bandage over her mouth, and replaced his own disguise. "See! how well I have studied my part. And do you think to elude me now? I was prepared for a little resistance; but when you find yourself surrounded by the gaudy trappings of wealth, moving like a beautiful queen midst scenes of enchantment and beauty, you will not regret the little sacrifice you have made, for the full enjoyment of my love and wealth."

He blew one clear, shrill note, from a small silver whistle, and a light vehicle emerged from a neighboring wood, and was soon by the side of Seymour and the unconscious form he was endeavoring to support.

## CHAPTER VIII.

"Shall I drive directly to B——?" asked the coachman as he closed the door of the vehicle upon the heartless libertine and his unconscious victim.

"Yes, directly—on—on! Lose not a moment, or we shall be overtaken, and the prize wrested from us. Ha! ha!" he continued, as the driver hastily mounted the box and turned the panting horses in an opposite direction.

"I have played my cards well this time, and by my faith, she is worth the trouble," he said, as he cast his eyes on the pale, tranquil features, over which the moonlight was fitfully gleaming. "How beautiful!" he soliloquized, while his fingers toyed nervously with the golden tresses that lay in damp, heavy masses around the blue-veined temples. "Beautiful as a goddess, and innocent as an angel."

The rapid motion of the carriage aroused Effie from insensibility, and for a moment her eyes rested vacantly upon the

strange objects that surrounded her. At length the whole truth flashed upon her half-crazed brain, and she sprang wildly from the loathsome embrace of the base Seymour. Maddened to desperation, she tore the bandage from its heavy fastenings and resolutely endeavored to make her escape through the half-open window, but she was prevented by the superior strength of her vigilant captor, who vainly endeavored to soothe her fears by words of flattering endearment.

On, on bounded the foaming horses through a gloomy forest that stretched miles away over a desolate plain. Effie's heart throbbed wildly as she thought of the distance that intervened between her and the quiet scenes of Elmwood. Tears of hopeless grief were gathering in her large blue eyes, and despair seemed already throwing around her a sombre shroud, when the faint rumbling of carriage wheels was heard in the distance, mingled with the rich, varying cadences of manly voices, as they chanted a song which floated on the night breeze to her bewildered ear. She sprang wildly to the window and shouted imploringly for assistance. They were nearing a little opening where the moonbeams were resting in soft, quiet beauty amidst the low, thick shrubbery, when she descried not far in the distance, two gentlemen in an open carriage riding leisurely along, and apparently enjoying the enchanting loveliness of the scene. Again she called loudly for help, and ere the strong arm of Seymour could wrest her from her position, she had the satisfaction of knowing that her cries had arrested the attention of the travellers, for they immediately reined their horse across the highway, and prepared themselves for defence.

"Make room for us to pass, strangers, or, by the honor of a gentleman, I will run you down," shouted the exasperated driver.

"Aye, aye," answered a bold, manly voice, from the defensive. "But first, let us know under what colors you are sailing—what your little craft is freighted with, and to what port you are bound?"

"None of your salt water gibberish, you insolent tarpaulin," said the coachman, as he cracked his whip briskly about the ears of the honest tar, who had grappled with giant strength the foam-wreathed bits of the panting horses. "What right have you to obstruct the progress of peaceful travellers, you porpoise? Give the horses room, or by my faith, they shall trample you beneath their iron hoofs."

"Aye, aye, sir, but you must first throw over some of your

smuggled ballast," answered the tar, as a low, stifled sob from the carriage, arrested his attention. "I am an honorable graduate from a United States man-of-war, and feel in duty bound to look after land pirates and kidnappers; so over with your ballast, you land-lubber, or I will shiver your little craft with a broadside salute from my thundering artillery. Skipper John, I say, overhaul that rigging a little, and let us see if the old hulk is sound to the core, while I stand at the helm, looking out for breakers."

"Aye, aye," said honest John, as he resolutely boarded the mysterious craft. "We'll soon see what sort of freight she carries, and whether she is in right trim for a safe and pleasant sea-trip. To the leeward, you fresh water varmint," he shouted, as Seymour levelled upon him the weight of his rounded fist. "To the leeward, until I have relieved this old hulk of some of its freight."

And he deliberately tore the stifling bandage from the pale, death-like features of Effie who lay senseless upon the hard carriage-floor.

"What in the devil are you about there, driver?" shouted the stentorian voice of Seymour. "Proceed at once on your journey, or, by all the laws of the land, I will chastise you as you deserve. Go on, I say, at once, or all will be discovered."

"And that is what I have been trying to do, sir," answered the trembling voice of the outsider. But I believe his majesty incarnate is holding the bits of my horses, for they stand panting and trembling, and are as obstinate as though they were under the benumbing influence of a hated mesmerist. I tell you, Seymour, it is impossible, unless you come to the rescue at once."

Nerved to desperation, Seymour sprang wildly from the carriage, regardless of the issue, and levelled a heavy blow at the head of the honest tar, who skilfully parried it; at the same time, with a successful blow from his sinewy arm he sent the infuriated Seymour, writhing with pain and rage, to the ground. The coachman, trembling like a child with fear, made a hasty exit into a deep, shadowy coppice, leaving the field, with its rich spoil, to the undisputed possession of the hated victors.

"Bear away, here a little, messmate," shouted the skipper, who had partially succeeded in restoring animation to the lifeless form of Effie, "and let us transfer this freight to our own

honest craft. Shiver my spars, if it isn't too precious to be left in the possession of this old maurading land pirate."

"Aye, aye," answered the messmate as he lent an honest hand to the assistance of the skipper. "I'm thinking he'll carry the mark many a day from the fifty pounder I levelled upon him, and if it has not knocked some of his eye-teeth out, it has probably brushed some of the cob-webs from his mental vision, so that he never will again have the audacity to run afoul of an honest man-of-war without showing a more respectable countersign than the black flag of a pirate craft."

"By the stars and stripes! if this isn't Effie Landon, my name is not Jack Dumas," said the skipper, as they lifted her from the coach to their own moonlit conveyance. "The handsomest girl in Christendom, and all the world beside. I tell you what, messmate, I always thought her some little seraph that had accidentally strayed away from the elysian bowers of her native sphere and folded her snowy wings amidst the quiet, rural scenes of Elmwood. I never looked at her without doffing my tarpaulin, and feeling as though I were in the presence of an angel. I have listened when the rich, soul-subduing pathos of her voice floated out upon the still evening air from the deep, shadowy foliage of a woodland dell, until it seemed that I was under the influence of some fair enchantress; and in spite of manliness and pride, the tears have gushed forth over my weather-beaten cheek with all the deliciousness of a summer shower. Poor Effie! must the angelic purity of your nature and your surpassing loveliness prove a snare to your path instead of a wall of defence?"

A half-uttered exclamation of rage from the vicinity of Seymour arrested their attention, and turning, they beheld him in the act of throwing his hat at the heads of his panting horses, in the wild delirium of the moment mistaking them for his treacherous and cowardly driver.

The horses, not quite relishing such unprovoked insult, and doubtless, thinking that they were in no very respectable company, lifted their heads and ears haughtily, and with a scornful neigh of defiance, bounded away over the sandy soil of the wooded plain, with the light, agile grace and freedom of the mountain chamois, to the no small consternation of the brow-beaten, crest-fallen Walter Seymour.

"Ship ahoy!" shouted the merry tars, as they caught a glimpse of the prancing horses disappearing through the shady

foliage, while peal after peal of ringing laughter burst upon the night air, mingling with the woodland echoes, until the welkin seemed peopled with invisible revellers. "Ship ahoy!" shouted the mirthful sailors, at the top of their voices, in the intervals of convulsive laughter, "Look out for breakers and sand-banks."

"I say, messmate," continued honest John, turning to the exasperated Seymour, "haven't you run your little craft hopelessly aground, on a suspicious looking sand-bank?" and eyeing him with a comical leer, he proceeded, "you never should have ventured your shattered old hulk so near the shoals and quicksands without having first placed on board an experienced and trust-worthy pilot. As a reward for your foolhardiness, we will leave you to the enjoyment of patience and pleasant dreams. No doubt when the day-star arises in the east your broad brow will be crowned with the laurel wreath, as an abundant supply may be found on yonder bank, which will probably serve for your pillow through the long night watches. And here we will leave you "alone, in your glory," wishing you a pleasant voyage over life's treacherous ocean, while we bear away in triumph the rich spoils of our glorious victory,"

## CHAPTER IX.

Mrs. Landon watched long and wearily at her favorite window, where the rose and lilac were twining their fragrant bloom midst the dark polished leaves of the pliant woodbine, forming here and there beautiful festoons that would have graced a monarch's brow, filling the room with their rich fragrance, fanning with their grateful breath the pale thin temples of the lonely watcher, until she sank from weariness and exhaustion upon the soft couch, and fell into a sweet and quiet slumber.

Light airy forms, and fanciful, fairy-like scenes floated around the dreamy, mental vision of the pale, wan sleeper; and music, richer and sweeter than Æolian harp-notes, fell enchantingly upon the charmed senses. Far away, over fields of Elysian beauty she strayed, where flowers ambrosial were nodding to the heavily perfumed zephyrs; where clear crystal streams flowed noiselessly along over beds of pearl and sparkling chrysolite; and a golden light of dazzling beauty tinged the deep, rich foliage of tree and plant, and lay like a halo

upon the green velvet turf. Birds of snowy plumage rested beneath the rich verdure of spicy groves, and from the swaying branches, strain after strain of clear liquid music, floated along, enchantingly blending with the melting vibrations of the golden harp, swept by seraph's hand. Forms of ethereal beauty were bowing before a throne of dazzling sapphire, and mingling their notes of praise with myriad angel voices, in an anthem of praise to the Lamb, who sat thereon, arrayed in the dazzling glory of His majesty and power.

There, bathed in the soft radiant glory that beamed from the face of the Immaculate, with the palm of Victory in his hand, and the Crown of glory, shedding a hallowed radiance around his brow, was the faithful old pastor, waiting with outstretched arms to welcome her to the New Jerusalem, the "city of their God."

She no longer felt pain nor weariness, nor the loneliness of widowhood; for her spirit bounded with all the freshness of youthful vigor, and her form, light and ethereal, seemed floating gracefully along, over streets of pearl and glittering gold. Her soul expanded with ecstatic delight, as it imbibed glory upon glory of that spirit scene. A smile of radiant beauty played around her pale, wan features, and with a half uttered exclamation trembling upon her lips, she awoke from her slumbers. Was she dreaming still? for she cast her eyes wildly around the apartment. Oh, no! she has stepped back again to a world of sorrow. It is Effie, who is kneeling there by her side, the rich redundancy of her hair falling in shining masses over her marble features. Tears are gushing from the deep azure of her large full eyes, now beaming with a wild, unnatural light.

"Effie, my child," said Mrs. Landon, feebly, as she laid her shadowy hand upon the cold white forehead of her kneeling daughter. "Effie dear, I thought you were an angel as I awoke from the rapturous delights of my dream; and after all I believe I was not much mistaken, for I have often thought that you were as nearly allied to them as mortal can be. But why, why those tears?" she inquired anxiously, as a whole shower of crystal drops pressed through the fair, pearly fingers, falling upon the dark covering of the couch, like sparkling, beaded spray. "Speak Effie, your distress alarms me. Have tidings of your brother—my boy—my only idol boy—Oh! tell me, Effie, is he—is he dead?"

The frenzied looks and apparent distress of the pale, trem-

bling invalid, alarmed the affectionate child, and she clasped her arms lovingly around the neck of her mother, and buried her blushing face in her throbbing bosom, and told her all the painful and exciting events that had transpired since she left her at the vine-clad, and flower-perfumed window, watching the varied beauties, the floating, fading and fairy-like shadows that danced attendance on a gorgeous sunset.

"And oh!" she said, as she concluded her painful and exciting narrative, "how gratefully and inexpressibly are we indebted to honest John and his companion for their noble and efficient aid. And after all, they seemed to think that they were the favored ones, for so providentially and effectually delivering me from the snares of the vile and heartless Seymour, and would not even allow me to express the overflowing emotions of my grateful heart."

"The hand that directed them to your rescue will reward them," said Mrs. Landon, as she knelt and poured out her soul in thankfulness to Him who ruleth all things aright; whose arm is stronger than the strongest; who watches even the sparrow's fall; who never slumbereth, and who hath sworn that He will requite in His own good pleasure, the wrongs of His people; who hath promised from the throne of His holiness that He will never leave, nor forsake the cause of the widow and fatherless, and whose promises are sure as the pillars of Heaven.

While she prayed, her soul seemed irradiated with the overpowering glories of the spirit-world, and the soft air that fanned her brow wafted from the fragrant bowers of the New Jerusalem. When she arose, her whole face shone with a light so holy and enrapturing, that Effie involuntarily shrank back with veneration, as though an angel of ethereal beauty had folded her snowy pinions within the consecrated walls of her happy home.

\* \* \* \* \*

"How beautiful everything appears," said Effie, as the next morning she entered the quiet little parlor, and with her mother, seated herself at the neatly spread breakfast-table; "everything seems arrayed in smiles and beauty. A charm seems floating with the perfumed breezes over fields of nodding flowers, where the sparkling dew-drops lay basking in the rich sunlight, or dissolving into aromatic fragrance.

How the clear limpid waters of lake and stream woo the winds, and dance and sparkle coquettishly as a whispering

zephyr floats by, or a clear sunbeam kisses a murmuring wavelet. And the birds—oh! the air wafts their joyous strains from the dark leafy shades of their fragrant bowers. A charm seems to surround and overshadow the peaceful quietude of our own sweet home; and oh! it never before seemed so like a consecrated place; the very air seems wafted from Paradise. Never before did I know how to prize it; and you my dear, dear mother," she said as she threw her arms affectionately around her neck, "never before seemed so like a protecting angel, so like a being of ethereal beauty, your whole face glowing with a light of such holy radiance. It appears, too, as though the spirit of my sainted father, the faithful pastor, is hovering approvingly around us with a shining angel band, chanting sweetly the songs of the Redeemed. My heart is filled to overflowing with gratitude and happiness, when I think of my providential escape from the spoiler's power. How visibly is the hand of God displayed in this, as well as in many other events of my short life."

They lingered long over the breakfast table, for each had a tale to unfold; and when Mrs. Landon described the beautiful vision of the previous night, Effie, as she looked into the deep, spiritual eyes, and saw the holy radiance overspreading her pale features, felt that ere long the vision would be realized; that her pure spirit would wing its way from earth to the spirit-land, there to receive the joyful welcome of her faithful husband, to be re-united where death never could enter, where sorrow and tears could never dim the light of their radiant joy. When they arose from the table, Effie took the pale thin hand of her mother, led her out into the little enclosure, and seated her upon a mossy, rustic bench, beneath the dancing shades of the graceful old elms, where she might inhale the odorous breezes, and listen to the dulcet strains that awoke to life the silent slumbers of the dim old woods, or floated softly as the harmony of an angel band over the intoxicated senses.

#### CHAPTER X.

As Seymour lay writhing with pain and anger, plan after plan of fearful revenge crowded through his distracted brain, when he saw the prize which he had thought completely within his power, so suddenly wrested from him and borne, unscath-

ed and in triumph from his polluting grasp. Half muttered curses pressed thick and fast through his clenched teeth, and he raised his head with a great effort to catch a last glimpse of the forest road. When the rumbling of wheels had died away in the distance, Seymour called loudly to the cowardly driver, for he had begun to fear that he was left alone, disabled and helpless, in the midst of a dense forest, surrounded by the silence and gloom of night, and perhaps by robbers and beasts of prey. His lips were parched and burning with thirst, his head swam dizzily and seemed bursting with pain and faintness from loss of blood and fear lest he should be obliged to pass the night alone, completely overcome him. He sank back upon the soft sandy soil, faintly muttering imprecations upon the head of his base accomplice, when the crackling of the underbrush aroused him, and he heard a slow stealthy footstep approaching.

He cast his eyes fearfully around him, expecting the next moment to see the glaring eye-balls of some ferocious beast, or the glittering dagger of a brigand chieftan. But his fears quickly subsided, for instead of these he saw the cringing, trembling form of the coward coachman.

"Devilish smart business this!" said Seymour, as the driver laid his trembling hand upon him to see if he were not already dead, but who, when he caught the half articulated words, bounded away with a wild leap, as though a voice from the tomb had accosted him, and then, as if half ashamed of his childish fears, again approached him, carelessly inquiring if he were much hurt.

"That remains to be seen," answered Seymour, pettishly. "I can scarcely move a limb, and have been bleeding profusely from the nose, ever since that confounded sea-gull pounced upon me."

"And the horses?" inquired the driver, straining his eyes in the dim distance.

"Gone to the bottomless pit, I hope, and my only regret is, that you did not accompany them," said Seymour, exasperated beyond control as the thought of his situation rushed vividly upon his mind.

"What in the devil is to be done?" he inquired. "Here we are, full three miles from any habitation, in a wild, gloomy forest, with no means of conveyance, nor any brighter prospect than a long, dreary walk, with not even the friendly light

of the moon to cheer us, for it is already hiding behind the branches of the trees."

"But don't you think you could walk a little, with my assistance," inquired the coachman, "and by that means manage to gain Wood-Cottage? I don't think it is more than a mile or two in the distance. I could leave you there to have your wounds attended to, and go at once for a conveyance to take you back to our hotel, where you can remain until you are able to appear in public."

"Raise me up a little and let me see if I can walk a step," said Seymour who did not relish the idea of remaining much longer in that gloomy forest. "If there are no bones broken perhaps I can manage, with your assistance, to walk a little, if you can stop this confounded bleeding. But I suppose that when you get me into some dark, shadowy recess, you will treacherously desert me every time a bat flaps his wings, or an owl cries out two-who, two-who."

By rubbing the swollen limbs, and a plentiful application of cold water to his head, Seymour, in a short time, was able to proceed slowly on his journey, with the coachman's assistance, (who, by the way, was the weaker party). They made tolerable progress, notwithstanding the protestations of Seymour to the contrary, who, every half hour, would fall wearily back, and declare that he could not walk another step to save the universe. Thus after a few hours they managed to gain Wood-Cottage, where they asked for admittance and aid, telling the credulous inmates that their horses had taken fright while passing through the forest, and Seymour had been thrown from the carriage and seriously injured.

The request was readily granted, and they were kindly invited to partake of such hospitalities as the cottage afforded, as long as it should be necessary. The bustling little housewife prepared cordials and bandages, while her husband washed and examined the wounds, none of which seemed deep or dangerous, save the temporary disfiguring of his former handsome visage.

It was in no very pleasant mood that our hero laid his aching head, that night, upon a pillow of down. Various emotions distracted and perplexed his mind, of which revenge and disappointment seemed the most prominent. But notwithstanding his pain, disappointment and vexation, his weary frame soon yielded to "nature's sweet restorer," and it was long past the sun-rise hour ere he awoke to the consciousness of his situa-

tion. The coachman had overtaken the fugitive horses and was ready for a drive home, when Seymour made his appearance. They were not long in gaining the hotel where Seymour had procured the conveyance for his unfortunate expedition. There he had leisure to brood over his disappointments, curse the fates for his unlucky and fruitless efforts, and call down imprecations upon the hand that had so effectually done its work, and left its impress so unbecomingly upon his face.

"Confound the luck!" he muttered, as he nervously surveyed himself for the twentieth time, during the last hour, in a large mirror. "I could wring the villain's nose, and send him headlong to the infernal regions, for his audacity in interfering with my designs and disfiguring the beauty which has won me love and wealth. It is confounded provoking," he continued, as he looked again upon the swollen features, discolored by the weight of heavy blows; "just now, when that proud millionaire gives his splendid fete in honor of his daughter's birth-day. And she—the proud, peerless, queenly Helen, would she acknowledge me as her suitor and future husband, before an assembly of the wealthiest and the noblest of the land, disfigured as I am now? I fear that I have made a mistake, and a sacrifice all too great for that little blushing daisy, nestling in her beautiful freshness midst the green, dewy bowers of Elmwood. Let me see—in ten days the magnificent halls of the millionaire will be thrown open for the reception of the gay throng. What am I to do? Any apology that I could send might not be favorably received, and I am sure if I should make my appearance there in this plight, it would be a death-blow to all the golden visions that have gladdened the day-dreams of the past, and thrown a charmed, mystic halo over the future."

But the gala-day arrived, and the princely halls of the millionaire were thronged with the elite of the city of B—.

Seymour was there, and introduced by his future father-in-law, as "a wealthy Southern gentleman, who was spending the summer in B— and its vicinity, and who, while taking a short drive into a neighboring country town a few days since, had unfortunately been thrown from the carriage, in consequence of the carelessness of the driver, and had barely escaped with his life."

## CHAPTER XI.

Again we stand upon the marble steps of Aubrey House.—How imposing it appears in comparison with the quiet unassuming parsonage, nestling so modestly beneath the shadows of the graceful elms, far away in the little rural village of Elmwood, where the weary stranger is sure of a heart-felt welcome. Here the imposing magnificence awes you, as you look around upon the frowning battlements and lofty pillars; and your heart seems changed to the cold adamant of the marble steps. Few enter here as familiar guests, and only those who can throw around them the drapery of glittering gold.

Let us enter: all is bustle and confusion. Servants are busily passing with light tread, from one apartment to another—chatting, laughing, and humming snatches of merry songs. Artisans are there, giving finishing touches to the already life-like pictures that adorn the stately walls; and upholsterers are changing the magnificent furniture for the more modern, Parisian styles—chairs, sofas, lounges, and ottomans of soft crimson velvet and damask; carpets of the softest and richest texture. Polished mirrors, rivaling in beauty the clear, smooth surface of a glittering lake, ornamented with frame works of gold and silver. Hangings of soft, azure satins, with heavily wrought lace, fall in rich folds over the large windows. Magnificent chandeliers are hanging as if by magic from the lofty ceiling, dazzling the eye with the cameleon hues of their glittering pendants.

A form is moving 'midst this scene of splendor, beautiful and fairy-like as a goddess. How her dark eye flashes with pride and satisfaction as it surveys the superb surroundings.—How daintily her small foot touches the soft yielding surface of the costly carpet; how shadowy and ethereal her lithe form, as it bends gracefully over vases of gold and silver, from which float the heavy odors of a thousand exotics. And oh! how her cheek glows, and her cherry lips part with a smile of satisfaction, as the polished mirror reveals to her gaze, the enchanting beauty of her face and form.

"Can it be?" she murmurs; and her voice floats through the apartment like the dulcet strains of a summer bird: "Can it be that I am so soon to be the happy and envied bride of the proud and wealthy Earnest Normand, who has turned away coldly from all the beauty, grace, wealth and fashion of that vast metropolis, New York? Happy, happy Clara," she said,

and she turned away with a pleased and haughty air as if she were already the envied wife of that noble, handsome millionaire, and ascended lightly as a bird on the wing, the winding stairs which led to her own apartments. She entered where fragile girls, pale and care-worn, were bending wearily over dresses of satin and damask. She examined with pleasure the rich gossamer leaves, the rubies and diamonds, and sprays of pearls and silver tissue which were to adorn, but could scarcely add to, the dazzling beauty of the expectant bride.

"Shall you be able to finish all these dresses by Saturday?" she inquired, as she glanced anxiously over the promiscuous piles of damask, satin and lace.

"I can scarcely tell," answered a young girl, pale and delicate as a tiny snow drop; her voice was soft and tremulous, and a pearly tear-drop glittered beneath the drooping lashes of her mild blue eyes. "My mother is very feeble, and requires so much of my attendance at home, that did not necessity compel me, I should not for a moment think of leaving her."

"Very romantic!" answered the haughty beauty, as her eyes rested with a contemptuous look upon the expressive features of the fragile girl. "Very romantic! fit to grace a novel. A young, delicate and, and—yes, I may as well out with it, for I do not believe you have one particle of vanity—beautiful, pale and drooping as a water-lily, anxiously plying the needle from early dawn till the midnight hour, to procure comforts for an invalid mother, should be rewarded with the hand of some love-smitten noble, or handsome millionaire. But as that is improbable aside from joking, Lilla, why not leave your mother in the care of some little attendant, and devote the remainder of the week exclusively to my work. It must be done—there is no evading that; and I know of no one to whom I could trust the management of it so confidently, as with you. Your mother will be all the better for the change; she is probably a little nervous and low-spirited, and your tears and sympathy, and incessant attentions cheat her into the belief that she is really the feeble, sickly thing you make her. Oh, fiddlestick, Lilla, what a ninny you are!"

Lilla had sat through this heartless harangue half stupefied with horror; her large blue eyes opened to their utmost capacity, and fixed with astonishment upon the graceful speaker.

"Clara Aubrey," she at length said, her beautiful face glowing with pride and indignation, "my mother is broken hearted. This very room where we now are and which is filled

with rich and costly trappings for your bridal, was once my mother's room. Here I first opened my eyes to the sunlight that peeped through the heavy folds of rich drapery. It was here that my first feeble wails awoke the slumbering pulses of a mother's heart. Here my first accents of joy found a ready response, and here has my light laughter echoed through these lofty halls, until, to my childish fancy it seemed that dancing fairies were concealed behind every marble column and faultless statue. And what am I now? A hireling, within the stately home where once my father was the honored lord and master. What has wrought this great change? My father, years ago, was co-partner with yours, in a flourishing, lucrative business. Once on a time, when they had been making a great and important change, and the business was in a very unsettled state, my father suddenly sickened and died. And in some way, when the affairs were investigated, after his death, all seemed to fall into your father's hands, and my mother found herself bereft of house and home, and all the luxuries to which she had been accustomed. She was thrown upon the world with only a few hundreds which had previously been left her by a relative, and which she had always termed her "pocket money." But it proved to us a friend indeed, for it kept us from actual want, until I was old enough to learn the art of dress-making which now is our only hope and aid."

"But I do not see why your mother should break her heart with grief, because, forsooth, she cannot enjoy the luxuries of a queen," replied the heartless beauty. "Methinks there is little philosophy in that."

"It is not the single misfortune of losing her wealth that has broken her heart; there are many things connected with it of a nature too aggravating to be borne with any degree of resignation; but she is a penniless and defenceless woman, with none to extend a friendly hand to sustain the rights of the widow and fatherless. None, did I say? Yes, there is One whose eye never closes in slumber, whose arm is stronger than the strongest, and who has promised that He will defend the cause of the widow and fatherless. And He that has promised cannot lie, for his promises are sure as the pillars of Heaven."

A half-smothered groan fell upon her ear, and Lilla, half-supersticiously strained her eyes far out into the shadowy passage from whence she thought the sound proceeded; half-concealed within a recess was Col. Aubrey, his eyes fixed wildly

upon her, and every feature wearing the hue of death. But he suddenly turned, and Lilla saw the violent trembling of his limbs, as he passed through an open door from her sight.

## CHAPTER XII.

Lilla returned home that evening, weary with the cares of the day, but she had many little offices of kindness to perform for her pale, grief-stricken mother. While she busied herself around the apartment, arranging and re-arranging everything that would add to the comfort or pleasure of the invalid, she related all the incidents which had occurred during the day, not forgetting the little episode of the Colonel's agitation as he became an accidental and she doubted not, an unwilling listener to her conversation with his daughter. "And mother," she said, as Mrs. Morton sat silently pondering these things in her heart, "I could not help thinking that he was not wholly innocent in regard to the settlement of my father's property; I have often heard you say that my father was supposed to be very wealthy, and Col. Aubrey was not rich and had not long been his partner when he died."

"All that is true, my child; but then he had papers to show, which satisfied the claims of the law, and the estate passed undisputed into his possession."

"I could not help thinking, mother, when I saw Clara Aubrey moving like a peerless queen amidst the splendor of my father's halls, that it was unjust, while I, his only child, was toiling beneath that roof for a meagre pittance;" and the weary and disheartened Lilla threw her arms around her mother's neck and shed upon her bosom the tears she could no longer restrain.

"Cheer up, my daughter; 'God's arm is not shortened that it cannot save; neither is His ear heavy that it cannot hear;' Though He slay us, let us trust in Him; let our faith be implicit in Him, and in His own good time he will mete out judgment and justice."

"Oh, mother, I do try to trust in Him; but sometimes my heart rebels at my hard and cheerless fate, and I feel it is not the will of God that it should be thus, but that we are suffering from the cunning and wicked devices of men."

"Well, my child, let us still hope and trust. The Holy Bi-

ble says—'Fret not thyself, because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity; for they shall soon be cut down like the grass and wither as the green herb.' 'Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.' Lilla, there is nothing that escapes the notice of Him who ruleth in judgement and mercy. There is wisdom in all his works, too vast for the comprehension of feeble man. We know not, when dark clouds obscure our sunlight, which one may be laden with a shower of blessings. The very humiliation to which you have unavoidably submitted, may at some future day work out for you your greatest happiness, which otherwise might not have been so effectually brought about. In your conversation with Clara, some word which fell from your lips might have touched the heart of the guilty man (if Col. Aubrey is such) and may eventually be the means of a partial restoration of your father's wealth. Then, my daughter, would you regret that you had been a hireling there, humiliating as it may now seem?"

"Oh, mother dear! you know that I would not, even for the few shillings that I earn by my labor, if it can procure for you one additional comfort."

Lilla smoothed and arranged the pillows for her mother's weary head, then took the harp that had been treasured as a father's gift, and sat down by the little window where the autumn breezes were sweeping merrily past, and the light of the harvest moon was streaming in, filling the room with a mellow radiance and lying like a halo 'midst the white folds that draped her mother's pillow.

Lilla sat long, sweeping the harp-strings with her slender fingers—her soft, sweet voice chanting an accompaniment to a plaintive air, her eyes beaming with the pure, holy emotions of her throbbing heart, until it seemed that she had caught the inspiration from a seraph band, so holy and subduing were the strains that floated far away through that still, moon-lit scene. Her gaze was turned heavenward, and she saw not a tall form bending gracefully in a listening attitude, in wrapt admiration of her song. Lilla at length left her harp and knelt reverently beside the "Old Arm Chair," in which her father had sat long ago, with his fairy pet upon his knee; that "Old Arm Chair" which had pillowed the weary head of her mother many a long dreary day, and upon which had fallen the warm tears of sorrow. Her small white hands were clasped as if to still the heart's rebellious throbings. Her beautiful lips mov-

ed tremulously, but no sound escaped them, for it was a silent, heartfelt invocation—that which angels bore away upon their snowy pinions that evening from the widow's home to the orphan's God.

The following morning Lilla ascended the marble steps of Aubrey House with a lighter heart, and with feelings calmer and more subdued than those which thronged her mind the day previous. She commenced her work trusting in her Heavenly Father, and this little passage of Scripture kept continually passing through her mind:—"Wait on the Lord and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee to inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off thou shalt see it."

#### CHAPTER XIII.

Late in the morning Clara entered the room in elegant *habille*, with the slightest perceptible shadow upon her fair brow.

"O dear," she exclaimed, as she threw herself with graceful *abandon* upon an elegant lounge, "Nurse Brown has just informed me that poor dear papa is ill, in bed. She heard him walking his room incessantly, the livelong night; sometimes muttering incoherent sentences; sometimes calling upon God in earnest and beseeching tones, to forgive him the great and aggravating sins of his past life. O, I am afraid papa is going to be sick, and it will so interfere with the splendor of my bridal; for I intend that it shall be a display which will well besit the envied bride of Ernest Normand, the handsome millionaire; and one not soon to be forgotten in the town of W—. It must be a display that has never been rivaled this side of the great Gotham of America. O, I must go and see poor papa, and order Nurse Brown to dose him well, and ward off the fever, if possible, till after the wedding is over. Ernest will be here early in the following week, and I do so want everything complete and in readiness. Lilla, do try and have my wardrobe finished by Saturday. O, by the way, I came in to speak of those satin flounces, but my mind was so confused by hearing of dear papa's illness that I had almost forgotten it. Do you not think that a few rows of this costly Brussels lace would add somewhat to the beauty of the flounces? See how charm-

ingly it will contrast and set off the rich lustre of the silk; it will look decidedly genteel.

"Yes," she continued, as she cast her eyes admiringly over the splendid garments, "I shall cause a greater sensation in the fashionable circles of New York when I return there, the peerless bride of Ernest Normand, than when I moved through those scenes, the fascinating Clara Aubrey. I tell you, Lilla," and she drew from a small casket a bandeau of diamonds and gold, and clasped it over her fair brow, amid the glossy raven curls which fell over a neck of alabaster clearness. "I tell you, Lilla, a snug little fortune has already been spent to adorn and beautify the bride of Ernest Normand. A cool five thousand for this," she added, as she turned her beautiful head, glittering with costly gems, to the pale, drooping girl beside her.

"It seems too much to give for such a bauble, to you, Lilla, I know," she said, as she discovered a pearly tear stealing over the soft azure of the sewing-girl's eyes, "but then, Lilla, anything less expensive and beautiful would not befit the wife of a millionaire. It is little in comparison to his millions and my father's wealth," and she turned again, with haughty grace, to the answering mirror.

"But it is much in comparison to the widow's mite," responded Lilla, as her head drooped despondingly over the rich flounces of satin and lace her skillful fingers were completing.

"Miss Clara," said a servant, who at that moment appeared at the door, "your father has sent again to request your attendance at his bedside; he is very ill, miss, and is much grieved that you have thus neglected him."

Clara hastily laid aside the glittering bandeau, and withdrew to her father's apartment.

She was awed by the pale, deathly hue that overspread his haggard features, and felt for the moment, that his illness was more serious than she had ever supposed it to be.

Clara was a spoiled and petted child, at an early age left motherless, to the care of an indulgent father, who spared neither pains nor wealth to gratify her desires. And so she grew up beautiful as a goddess, proud, willful, and heartless. Her father did not see, or rather had never corrected her; none had ever dared to tell the imperious beauty that she had a fault, and she moved in her beauty and pride, the fascinating but heartless belle, winning, spurning and trifling with a love as pure, true and holy as ever was offered at the shrine of

beauty and grace. Many a noble heart had felt the withering blight of her coquetry, but on none had it fallen with such irresistible power and utter hopelessness as upon the noble, generous, and high-souled William Landon.

And did she think of him now — him to whom she had pledged her vows of eternal constancy? Yes, his image haunted her like a spectre. In the still, midnight hours a pale, shadowy visitant seemed floating dreamily around her pillow, his face thin and ghostly, his dark, stony eyes glaring wildly upon her, his bony hand raised deprecatingly, his bloodless lips murmuring of an avenging God. The deep vortex of pleasure into which she had wildly plunged, far away in the gay and bewildering scenes of New York could not drive that memory hence. She sought and won adulation from the admiring crowd. She smiled graciously upon the manly forms that knelt in adoration before her, and when Ernest Normand, the gifted, proud, and handsome millionaire bowed at her feet, and offered her the first, pure love of a noble heart, a hand unstained by guile, and a home that a prince might covet, then her triumph seemed complete.

In the golden harvest month, she left the scenes of that gay metropolis, elated with the pride of conquest, and hastened to her father's home to prepare speedily for the nuptials, which, by her lover's urgent request, were to be celebrated within her father's halls, where he would join her at the appointed time.

All went on "merrily as a marriage bell" at Aubrey Mansion, until the sudden illness of its master seemed to throw a deep gloom over the brilliancy of the approaching festival. — Col. Aubrey's illness increased fearfully and rapidly, and ere the week had passed away, he was lying in his gorgeous chamber, shrouded in the habiliments of death.

The pomp and imposing display of wealth, sable plumes nodding mournfully over the funeral car, and snowy horses draped with badges of mourning, attended in state, his unconscious remains to the silent resting-place of the dead. Clara Aubrey returned from the tomb of her father, to his desolate halls, struggling with the first deep grief that had ever found an entrance to her thoughtless heart. A few days passed away, in which lawyers, creditors, and debtors were closeted together, over the private documents of the deceased, and the astounding result of their investigation was that he had died hopelessly insolvent.

On the very day which had been appointed for the great

bridal display at the Aubrey Mansion, a suspicious-looking red flag floated out from a gorgeously draped front window, and large, glaring placards announced to the inhabitants of W—— and vicinity, that the whole estate, real and personal, belonging to the late Col. Aubrey, would be sold at public auction, for the benefit of his creditors.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

We will not attempt to describe the emotions of the proud, peerless beauty, when this intelligence was brought to her ears. She paced the room, frantically wringing her white hands in agony, swaying her beautiful form to and fro, as the hot tears fell in crystal showers on her burning cheek. She passed from one room to another, taking a hasty leave of the many dear, familiar objects which so soon must adorn other homes, and beautify other forms. Oh! it was painful indeed, contrasting strangely with the brilliant bridal she had so hopefully anticipated. She descended to the parlors and looked around upon the gorgeous display. Oh! how this grandeur mocked her unutterable anguish. She sank back into an easy chair, and buried her face in the soft velvet cushions and wept tears of agony, such as never before had gushed forth from the deep fountains of her heart, or dimmed the lustre of her dark, beaming eyes.

"Please, Miss Clara, here is a letter for you," said a servant, who had been seeking her for the last half hour, and who had at last found her, weeping as though her very heart would break. "Please, miss, don't take it so hard," said the servant, compassionately. "You will be a great lady yet, if your father's house and all these fine things do pass under the hammer."

Clara made no answer, but waved her impatiently away. With trembling hand she broke the seal, for a voice prophetic seemed to whisper, "this fills the measure of your bitter cup."

She brushed the blinding tears from her swollen eyes, and perused with the calmness of despair the following lines:

"MISS AUBREY:—You will readily excuse me for not attending you in person, when I inform you that I take this method to avoid the pain on my own part, and the mortification on yours, of a formal personal meeting.

"In the wild delirium of first love, I offered to you a faithful heart, and flew impatiently on the wings of affection, to claim you as my bride, and bear you away to my own home, to be its proud and envied mistress. How my heart bounded with high hopes and manly pride, as I entered your native village one week since, and six days before the time appointed for our marriage, so eager was I to behold again the beautiful enchantress of my soul. But oh! a change, a fearful change 'came o'er the spirit of my dreams.' I had scarcely entered the inn, before that name, sweeter than all others, fell upon my ears. I listened again; but oh! the withering, scorpion blight that the next breath wafted to my bewildered senses!

"Clara Aubrey!" I mentally exclaimed, 'Clara Aubrey heartless, soulless, perjured? Impossible! she is not only beautiful, but amiable and virtuous as an angel.'

"I strode frantically towards the speaker, ready to make him pay dearly for his aspersions.

"How dare you?" I thundered, with my hand resolutely uplifted above his head. 'How dare you couple the name of Clara Aubrey, that peerless lady, with such vile slander? By the honor of a gentleman, you shall answer for your insolence. Do you not know that she is the daughter of the noble Col. Aubrey, and the affianced bride of a gentleman of unimpeachable honor? Do you dare, with your vile tongue, to poison the very atmosphere in which she moves? Heartless, perjured, indeed!'

"A sneering smile passed over his face, for which I had raised my hand to fell him to the earth, when the landlord interposed with—

"It is no mystery here, sir; all that my friend has asserted of Clara Aubrey is only too well known. Everybody, for miles around, has heard of her heartless career. Why, it was only a little more than a year ago, that one of the noblest young men our country can boast, lay weeks and months beneath this roof, a perfect wreck in body and mind; and all for her coquetry. For when a wealthier bowed at her shrine, all unconscious of another's claim, she lightly broke the vows this noble man had prized, and his heart too, sir. Oh! could you have seen him as he lay in wild delirium, raving incessantly of her dazzling charms, of his withered hopes, his blighted youth, and the loved ones of his far-off home. It was a painful sight; and when the wealthier rival, who had never left his bed-side, sent her a cold and formal dismissal,

she suddenly left W——, without even deigning to look upon the desolation she had wrought. She fled to the gay scenes of New York, in search of other victims, where, I understand, she has captivated by her arts a noble millionaire, who is soon to make her his bride.'

"Are these assertions true?' I inquired, as I stood motionless as a statue before the excited speaker. 'As you value the salvation of your soul, and the happiness of a fellow being, answer me truly, for before you stands the affianced husband of Clara Aubrey; and sooner than give my hand to such as you have described, I would see it writhing over a slow and torturing fire, until every sinew had been consumed.— Sooner than accept a perjured heart, I would take a poisonous viper to my breast, and fold it closer, till the last drop of my blood had been given to satisfy its cravings.'

"Any one in the village of W—— will verify my assertions, sir,' answered the landlord, 'but I will refer you particularly to the parish pastor, for he visited Mr. Landon frequently while he was suffering from that fearful prostration here.'

"I have visited the minister, and he has told me even more than I had gathered at the inn. Can it be possible that one possessed of such rare charms, should be destitute of that priceless gem—the heart? Yes, it is—it must be so. How vividly the truth flashes over the troubled waters of my soul now! Miss Aubrey, I give you back your vows. I cannot wed one utterly destitute of every gentle and loveable trait. Think not that I have lightly resigned you, for the struggle between love and honor, has been like the separation of body and soul. I truly sympathize with you in your affliction, and had I found you all my glowing imagination had portrayed, I should have rejoiced at your reverses, that I might thus have shown to the world how disinterested was the affection I cherished for you. Profit by the lessons which you have so dearly learned, and never again trifle with the love of a noble, generous heart.

"Farewell forever.

"ERNEST NORMAND."

Clara read every word with a calmness fearful to behold; and when she had concluded, the letter dropped from her nerveless hands, as though it had been the poisoned chalice of death. A shadowy form seemed to flit by, slowly and audibly murmuring, "the hand of the avenger is upon thee, proud, heartless beauty! The voice of justice cries out from the crushed

hopes of thy noble victims! Take the cup which thou hast prepared for them and quaff thyself its bitterest dregs."

The sharp stiletto of despair had pierced the quivering core of her desolate heart, and she fell back upon the luxurious cushions in a death-like swoon.

Purchasers had already begun to assemble, and were passing through the spacious halls, examining the many costly articles which were soon to be sold. "I say, look here, Knight of the hammer," said a wag, turning his small grey eyes with a comical leer from a mysterious looking pile of sable and white, half concealed by velvet and damask, to the auctioneer who was busily engaged in another part of the room, "is this casket of diamonds to be sold with the mass, or separately to suit the purchaser. Because if it is to be sold in a separate lot, by Jove, I'll be the one to bid, if it does'nt go higher than I can count. Would it not be a splendid decoration for a rich man's parlor?" All eyes were turned to the supposed casket; when lo! the lifeless form of the unconscious beauty met their gaze. Many looked compassionately upon that beautiful lady, stricken and desolate as the fragile flower over which the cold frost-blight had passed with its withering power. They hastily summoned servants who bore her to her own apartments, and there for weeks she lay in utter unconsciousness of all that passed around her.

## CHAPTER XV.

After having listened to the story of the landlord and his friend, which disclosed so fearfully the perfidious character of his intended bride, Ernest Normand's heart throbbed wildly with a thousand conflicting emotions. When night threw her grey mantle around the village of W——, he walked out, alone and dispirited, through the still, moon-lit streets, to calm the agitation of his troubled mind. He had walked slowly and thoughtfully for a time, and was just turning the corner of a narrow lane which led into a large square, or "green," as the villagers termed it, when the soft, tremulous strains of a harp, accompanied by a rich, mellow voice, floated out on the still evening air, and thrilled every nerve in his frame.

He paused, for the enchanting beauty of the scene inspired

his soul with its magical influence, and rendered him powerless to proceed. The autumn breezes were swaying the graceful branches of the tall elms, their shadows dancing fantastically as a troupe of sporting fairies upon the smooth, green sward, where the light of the broad harvest moon was lying in quiet beauty, while the mellow strains of that harp and voice floated far through the still air like the enchanting, soul-subduing melody of an angel band.

Normand stepped aside and leaned abstractedly, for a moment, against the little white paling that enclosed a patch of vines and flowers. He parted the thick shrubbery and peered cautiously up the clean-swept walk into the moon-lit window. There she sat—that pale, angelic warbler, her soft, spiritual eyes raised with holy resignation to the clear, blue sky, and her beautiful features varying in expression as the rich cadences rose and fell on the whispering night-breeze. And when she knelt, her small, white hands clasped in devotion, the brown hair thrown carelessly back from a pure, open brow, and her eyes uplifted in silent invocation, it seemed to the bewildered Normand an enchanting dream.

“Oh!” he exclaimed half audibly, as he partially, awoke from his trance, “can one of earthly mould be so nearly allied to the angels? Clara Aubrey—what a contrast! Had you been half as pure as that kneeling girl, next to the God of heaven I would have worshiped you from the holiest recesses of my heart.”

With a slow step and desponding air, he wended his way to the village inn, and the following morning left W—— until he could compose his mind sufficiently to deliberate upon his future course of action. He did not return again until after the death of Col. Aubrey, and the eve before the sale of the splendid house and magnificent furniture.

After despatching his letter of dismissal to the heartless Clara, he assumed a disguise, and sauntered forth in the direction of the cottage and the elm-shadowed green, and thence, into the broad street, where that grand old structure, Aubrey Hall, reared its turrets in imposing stateliness.

The sale had commenced, and as Normand was slowly passing the arched gate-way, he overheard a group of gentlemen within the enclosure speaking compassionately of the situation of Clara, and rehearsing all the incidents of the morning, connected with her illness, and her present unconsciousness. His heart was moved to pity at the thought of her sudden and aw-

ful reverses, and with a heart full of noble benevolence, he mingled with the throng and redeemed many costly and valued articles, for the benefit of the distressed and stricken orphan. Weeks passed away, and when Clara Aubrey again woke to consciousness, she was in her own apartment, with the faithful old nurse bending anxiously over her.

“Dear nurse,” she said, as she cast her eyes languidly around her, “I have had such a dream! O! it was so fearful!” and she buried her face, with a shudder, within the folds of the rich drapery. “Tell me, nurse, it was not so. I have been ill, have I not? Oh, no; it was nothing but a dream. My father is not dead; this grand old house and all its magnificent adornings have not passed under the hammer of the village auctioneer? Clara Aubrey, the proud child of affluence, the affianced wife of a noble millionaire, penniless, orphaned, and—and—*abandoned*! Oh, no, no, no! it is not so! It was a dream; tell me, nurse, was it not so?”

“Dear girl,” sobbed the faithful old nurse, as she adjusted a pillow, “it was not all a dream. God knows I wish it was, for your sake; but your father is dead, and—and—”

“The rest, then, is not a vision. Ah—yes! I remember it all now. Oh! that hour of fearful despair! Lover, friends and wealth, all—all gone; and I, like a shattered wreck, am left to float whithersoever the winds and waves of life may waft me, without compass or guide. Oh God! this is more than I am able to bear.” And she buried her face in the downy pillow and wept tears of bitter anguish.

“Dear miss, compose yourself; do not give way to such extravagant grief; your case is not utterly hopeless. Much that you have prized, is, by the benevolence of a friend, yours still; and you have money sufficient for your present comfort.”

“A friend, say you? who? what?” inquired Clara.

“This will inform you,” answered the nurse, as she handed her a note tied with a bit of white ribbon.

“Read it, read it, nurse; my eyes and nerves are too weak at present.”

“Well, then, it is of no consequence now,” answered the nurse evasively, as she tossed it carelessly into a casket near her.

Weeks passed away, and the note was forgotten, at least by Clara. She had somewhat regained her health, and as she reclined one day with graceful languor upon the yielding cushions of a rich couch, she looked more beautiful than in other days.

"Nurse," she said, as her eyes glanced restlessly around the apartment, "bring me that casket, for I would know if they have taken my jewels also. No, here they are;" she said, as she raised the lid, "here they are just as I left them when the servant called me to my father's bedside. Why have these been preserved? Why were they not sold with the rest?"

"Because," answered the nurse, "that friend would not suffer them to intrude upon the quietude of your sick apartment. His purse redeemed them for you, and that note will explain. Read it now, Clara; it is concealed beneath that *bandeau*."

Clara raised the note, untied the graceful little knot and drew forth a glossy card upon which were stamped the names of "MR. & MRS. ERNEST NORMAND, New York." On the back were neatly penciled the name and respects of Lilla Morton. Clara's cheek blanched, but her voice was firm when she requested an explanation.

"That note explains all," answered the nurse. "Lilla Morton is the bride of Ernest Normand. They were married at the widow's cottage, and Lilla did not look like the pale, drooping seamstress, in her rich satin and nice laces. And her mother—oh, you should have seen her eyes sparkle with pride as she saw her beautiful daughter the happy wife of Normand. It was a gala day at the widow Morton's cottage, that which made Lilla the bride of the noble *millionaire*. And when they left W—— and her humble home, tears and smiles, congratulations and regrets met them on every side. Normand looked proud and happy beside his beautiful bride, as they passed the arched gate-way on bidding adieu to W——. Lilla was all tears and blushes as the oft-repeated 'God bless you' fell upon her ear, from many a friendly villager. I am sure there was not one who did not rejoice at the good fortune of Lilla Morton and her invalid mother."

Clara had sunk back upon the couch during the recital; her cheek was deathly pale, her eyes gleamed with a strange and fearful light, and when the old nurse bent tenderly over her, she motioned her impatiently from her presence. When she was alone, the trial came. Oh! it was fearful—that struggle, as of life and death. But it passed away, and when the nurse again made her appearance, the once beautiful face of Clara Aubrey was calm and passionless as despair could make it.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Rosy-glade! What a little gem of a place it is, nestling so quietly amid the grand old hills, with its neat cottages, and patches of flowers and shrubs peeping through crevices of the white paling which encircles them. Here, too, upon pleasant and conspicuous sites, are elegant villas of gothic style and sober grey coloring, almost hidden in the shadow of fine old trees, and enclosed by dark iron railings, thus contrasting strangely with the sweet little cottages.

Here, the lark dares to cradle her fledglings within the rich foliage, and sing her sweetest morning lay; birds of gayer plumage flit the livelong day among the graceful, swaying branches; and at eve the plaintive whip-poor-will sings her sweet good night, to a listening mate. Here are many glittering spires, pointing heavenward, like faithful sentinels upon the walls of Zion.

The glad song of the happy husbandman floats out upon the morning breezes, mingled with the distant murmuring of his flocks and herds. Oh, it was exquisitely beautiful, a little earthly Paradise; at least so thought the occupants of a splendid carriage as it rolled leisurely along the broad, shady avenues, which led to their grand country residence, Hargrave Hall.

It was June, and the air was balmy with the perfume of flowers, and vocal with the wild bird's song. The eye sparkled, the cheek glowed, the pulses throbbed wildly and the music of the bounding heart mingled with that of nature.

The ponderous gates were thrown open to admit the wealthy master to his rural home, and smiling servants bowed obsequiously to bid him welcome.

Captain Hargrave was a tall, noble-looking gentleman, easy and graceful in his manners, and when his servants hastened to bid him welcome, he grasped their hands with the cordiality of a brother. His smile was affable, his words kindly and encouraging.

Mrs. Hargrave was an English lady by birth, possessing great personal attractions and a highly cultivated mind. They had one daughter, the only pledge of a happy union, whom they both looked upon almost with idolatry.

She was surpassingly beautiful, and her mind pure and uncontaminated by wealth and fashion.

The trio, with the exception of the servants, were all that composed the family on their first arrival at Hargrave Hall.

The day passed pleasantly away, and the cool sunset breezes floating lazily through the vine-clad windows, wooed them forth to the delights of a rural ramble.

It was evening; the bird's gushing melody was hushed, and the bee no longer hummed dreamily within his rose-curtained bed. No sound save the sweet, plaintive notes of the whip-poor-will broke the stillness of the hour, or disturbed the holy thoughts that rose in silent invocation from a youthful suppliant who knelt beside a lonely grave in the rural cemetery of Rosyglade.

Her head drooped mournfully over the unpretending marble, and her rich golden hair mingled its shining clusters with the blossoms upon the dewy turf. She heard no footsteps approaching, for her thoughts were far away amid the happy associations of her childhood's home—far away by the silent graves of her foster-parents, in the village of Elmwood.

"Oh, God!" she at length murmured, "why have I been spared to meet alone the storms of an adverse world? Why have I lived to see all that I loved of earth pass away like a fleeting shadow? Why could I not have breathed out my life with her who lies so peacefully slumbering beneath the sod? And why or for what purpose have I lived at all? Oh, God! whatever may be thy will concerning me, grant that I may submit to it without repining."

She raised her head to brush away the blinding tears, displaying to the interested listeners a face of rare and dazzling beauty.

"What an angel!" whispered Mrs. Hargrave, as she stood transfixed with admiration.

"A perfect little paragon!" said Hellen, as her large hazel eyes looked out witchingly from their long silken lashes.

"No, no, she is niether," said Captain Hargrave, smiling at their enthusiasm: "Nothing but a poor Christian girl, suffering from affliction, and may-be alone, and friendless, and poor. If so, God help her, for the poor have few to help them. Let us go" he continued "and see if we can comfort her."

They passed out from beneath the dark cypress, and as they neared the lone grave she had hallowed with her prayers and tears, the inscription upon the marble caught the notice of Captain Hargrave, and an exclamation of wonder burst from his lips.

Pale and trembling with fear, the weeper sprang from her kneeling posture, revealing all the beauty of her face and form.

In an instant the hand of Captain Hargrave was laid gently but firmly upon her arm.

"God of Heaven!" he exclaimed, "what do I see? Tell me, I conjure you, who you are?" And he held her back, and surveyed the trembling girl with a look of wild bewildering uncertainty. "Do my eyes and senses deceive me? Who are you? Explain this mystery, I implore you lady, or I shall go wild with this torturing suspense."

"My name, sir, is Effie Stanley Landon," she answered, as soon as she could compose herself sufficiently to speak. "My mother lies there," pointing to the little grave. "The parents of my adoption are mouldering beneath the quiet shades of Elmwood, and like a lamb from its fold I have wandered, with none save the God of Heaven for a protector."

"And He, oh, He is all-sufficient," answered Captain Hargrave. "He has guided you to the arms of one who will be to you a father; whose love shall shield you from the storms and temptations of a cold and pitiless world." And as the tears fell in torrents down his cheek, he continued pointing to the marble slab, "She who moulders there, and whose name is inscribed upon that stone, was my only, beautiful, and idolized sister. I left her, a young and happy bride, with the husband of her choice, for a voyage across the sea, little thinking that in my absence death would steal into their Paradise and bear away those I had so fondly loved. With a light, buoyant heart I bade them adieu, dreaming not that I was receiving the last kindly smile and embrace; the last heart-felt 'God bless you,' from those beautiful lips; but alas! we know not what a day may bring forth. Far away on the treacherous ocean, I was overtaken by storms and shipwreck, and when at last I did return to my native land, it was to find my sister's home deserted, or rather, occupied by strangers. They told me that she and her noble husband had long ago passed away from earth. But they told me not that they had left a helpless orphan to buffet alone the storms of life."

"Until this day, although I have sought it with tears, I have never known where the form of my once beautiful sister was mouldering; by it I have found her orphan child. And oh! so much like her! just as she looked twenty years ago, when I left her, happy as a youthful bride could be. So much like her that I cannot make you otherwise than the one I have loved and lost. Come to my arms and receive the embrace of one who will ever love you as he has cherished her!"

"Marie," he said, turning to his still beautiful wife, "will you take this niece to your own bosom, and let her find shelter and repose within the hallowed precincts of our cherished home?"

Marie's heart was too full for utterance, but she clasped the orphan with all a mother's tenderness to her bosom, and laid her small white hand upon the fair brow of the orphan, and murmured, as she choked back the gushing tears:

"Thus may the God of Heaven requite me if the orphan receive aught but love and tenderness from my hands. There is room in my home and heart, lone wanderer, and all that a mother can be I will ever prove to you. Helen, my child, give her a sister's welcome, and thank God that He has providentially directed her to us."

A fair white arm was thrown around the form of each, and they, the orphan and the heiress, mingled their tears together upon the bosom of the kind and generous Lady Hargrave.

"And you, my sweet sister, for such I shall call you," whispered Helen, her large, beautiful eyes filling with tears, "You, sister Effie, will never be lonely and friendless again, and we shall be so happy."

The scene by that little grave was truly affecting, and the shades of evening were gathering around them ere they thought of returning to the Hall.

"Come, sweet cousin Effie," said Helen, who was the first to think of returning, and she threw her arms affectionately around the form of Effie, "You must go with us now, to our home and yours, and by-and-by you must fill the place of Helen by my father's hearth-stone. How fortunate, is it not, mother?" she said, archly. "How little you will miss me now, when I go from you, a happy bride, to cheer another's heart and home."

"Dear uncle, when my father, Charles Stanley, died, my beautiful mother was left alone and friendless, crushed beneath the weight of sorrows which few may know. Her husband, the idol of her heart, in a moment wrested from her agonized embrace by a relentless hand: her only loved and cherished brother, as she supposed, in a watery grave, far away on the treacherous ocean, her parents sleeping together in a distant churchyard, and an unavoidable scene of sorrow and trial approaching. There was none to reach forth a friendly hand or whisper words of consolation and tenderness into her troubled ear. She was sinking beneath the weight of her sorrows,

when a friend of her girlhood, by dint of much perseverance, sought her out and conveyed her to her own quiet home, where she was cared for as tenderly as though she had been a sister, until her freed spirit took its flight to the happy spirit-land. That friend of my sainted mother, by complicated and overwhelming misfortunes, is now a sufferer. Disease and adversity are her constant attendants, and the friends that gathered smilingly around her in prosperity have all, one by one, deserted her. Shall I desert her, too? Shall I turn my back upon her sorrows, and heartlessly go to enjoy the luxuries of your home?"

"No, no, my sweet girl," answered Captain Hargrave, his noble heart swelling with deep, generous emotions. "You shall not desert her, and may God and the holy angels desert me if she does not find in me a friend indeed. Tell me where she is, that I may speedily have her removed to my own home of comfort and plenty, where a proper and efficient nurse can be provided to watch over her through the wearisome days of her illness."

Effie could not speak, for her heart was overflowing with joy and thankfulness, but she pointed to a low-roofed cottage, just beyond a clump of weeping willows, and the next moment the whole party were moving rapidly in the direction of the widow's home.

## CHAPTER XVII.

Great preparations were being made at Hargrave Hall for the bridal of Helen, for it was there, midst the quiet scenes of nature, that she desired the ceremony to be performed. It was with a thousand maidenly hopes and fears that she looked forward to the approaching event.

One afternoon, Helen entered the room of her cousin, her cheeks glowing, her beautiful eyes sparkling, and her heart throbbing wildly beneath her closely fitting bodice. She held a bandeau of pearls and flowers in her hand.

"Do, sweet Coz," she exclaimed hurriedly, "assist me in adjusting this in a becoming manner upon my head. Here I have been coaxing and quarrelling with it for a half hour, but to no purpose. Every moment I am expecting to see George sweeping up the avenue, and it would be odd indeed, if I were

not in readiness to welcome my intended after such a long absence. You will think favorably of him, I know, Effie, he is so noble, so affable and intellectual. And if such a passion could find a place within your angelic heart, I should almost fear that you would envy me the possession of such a rare piece of humanity. There, that fits to a charm, coz; I knew your nimble little fingers would work like magic where mine were powerless. See! see! quick, Effie; there he is on that noble black charger, just passing under the shadow of those sweeping elms."

Effie looked and caught a full view of his handsome face, as he pranced gracefully into the court below.

"Walter Seymour!" she ejaculated, and fell senseless to the floor. The cries of Helen soon brought assistance from the household, and among the rest was Captain Hargrave, to whom Helen hurriedly related the whole affair.

"Something is wrong here, my child," said Captain Hargrave, thoughtfully, "which must and shall be explained as soon as your cousin has recovered sufficiently. In the mean time, go and receive your lover as though nothing unusual had happened; but be sure and not mention the name of your cousin, nor any circumstance connected with her at present. My compliments to George Shelbourne, and tell him I will pay him my respects in person as soon as I can disengage myself from the pressure of business affairs."

The shock which Effie had received was so sudden and overpowering that it was many hours before she was able to converse at all; and when she did, it was through the most earnest solicitations of her kind uncle that she was induced to relate anything connected with the sad and mortifying event. When she considered that the happiness and well-being of her beautiful and gentle cousin were at stake, and the reputation and honor of a family dear to her as life itself, she hesitated no longer, but exposed all the villainy of her false and perjured lover.

Captain Hargrave bit his lips with vexation, and requested Effie to remain for the present in her own room, with which request she readily complied, as she had no desire or inclination to mingle with the company below.

The guests had all been invited to the wedding, previous to the arrival of Shelbourne, and as Captain Hargrave saw no alternative, everything went on as usual, preparatory to the interesting ceremony.

The day at last arrived, and the grand old halls of Rosyglade were filled with the aristocracy of the city of B——.

"I have reserved a pleasant surprise for you to-day, Mr. Shelbourne," said Captain Hargrave, as the former was receiving with easy grace the congratulations of the gathered throng.

"Indeed!" said Shelbourne, casting a scrutinizing glance at his future father-in-law; "anything is pleasant to me to-day," he added, smilingly, and a vision of a cool hundred thousand, merely as a bridal present, flitted by on golden pinions.

"I have a niece, lovely as an angel, for whom I request the honor of an introduction."

"Oh, sir, I shall be most happy to comply with your request; but you must know that my heart is invulnerable to all feminine charms, save those of your beautiful, peerless daughter."

"We will see," answered Captain Hargrave, as he strode majestically across the room to a side door, which he gently opened, and soon returned with a pale drooping girl leaning timidly upon his arm.

"Mr. Shelbourne, *alias* Walter Seymour," said Captain Hargrave, as he approached the trembling and crest-fallen culprit, "allow me to honor you with an introduction to Miss Effie Landon, my niece, and co-heiress with my daughter, whom, beautiful and amiable as she is, you have sought her solely for the wealth she inherits. Look upon this girl, whose love you have sought and won, and spurned. Look into the deep azure of those eyes, upon the purity of that spotless brow; if God had not been on her side, she would even now have been a victim to your polluting power. Monster," he continued, and he raised his arm to fell him with indignation to the earth, but suddenly he withdrew it, as the culprit recoiled with horror from his touch, and said, "No, I will spare you for a higher tribunal. Ladies and gentlemen, look upon this loathsome viper; mark him well, that he may never again enter the sacred enclosure of our hearts and homes, to poison the sweetest flowers that have bloomed beneath our care."

Seymour essayed to speak, but his tongue was powerless, his lips pale and tremulous, his eyes distended, and glaring wildly from one to another of the indignant crowd, till at last, with one powerful effort, midst the hisses and indignant expressions of the company, he rushed from the room to the

court, and bounding like a mad-man upon his horse, which Captain Hargrave had previously ordered to be in readiness, he dashed down the avenue, and sped on until the spires of Rosy-glade were lost in the dim, misty distance.

Weeks passed away, and Effie still continued pale and drooping. Her heart yearned for the hallowed associations of her childhood's home, and she requested her uncle's permission to set out immediately for Elmwood.

"And you shall go, my dear child," said Captain Hargrave, compassionately, as he looked into her tearful eyes, "for I fear there has been little to endear you to Rosy-glade, save the melancholy satisfaction you have found by your mother's grave."

"Oh, my dear, kind, generous uncle, it is with deep regret that I anticipate leaving the home and friends that have twined themselves so closely around my heart; but my health requires a change, and I long once more to lay my weary head within the hallowed sanctuary of my early home. But little awaits me there, save loneliness and desertion, but it is the sweet, happy home of my innocent childhood. Dear uncle, I would not go alone; will you permit cousin Helen to accompany me, and spend a few weeks, or months, at the parsonage? I know that she will be charmed with the chaste and quiet beauties that surround the scenes I have loved so well."

"Do, dear father," rejoined Helen, "permit me to accompany cousin Effie to Elmwood. It will be so delightful. In the mean time, you and mother can take your intended excursion to the Springs; and on your return, join us at the parsonage. It will be more congenial to my feelings at present than mingling with the gay and fashionable throng."

"Have it your own way, my children," said Captain Hargrave, smilingly, "for much as I might desire it otherwise, I can never withstand the wishes of two such powerful pleaders. Where my little niece here," he continued, as he laid his hand caressingly upon her soft, golden curls, "where such an angelic creature has been reared without spot or blemish, I fear nothing for the lofty purity of my own child. Go, and may God and his holy angels guard and bless you in your absence."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Weeks of unalloyed happiness to Effie and Helen passed rapidly away at the parsonage. Friends and acquaintances gathered around the "dear little orphan," to bid her welcome once more to their homes and hearts. The faithful old house-keeper, under whose watchful eyes Effie had grown up from childhood, and who, indeed, now seemed to the orphan a second mother, returned from her temporary absence, to pre- side again over the deserted hearth-stone of her parsonage home.

Again, voices of subdued and chastened mirth awoke the slumbering echoes there, and music, soft, rich and soul-stirring, floated out again on the still evening air from the quaint old parsonage.

One evening Helen was seated at the piano, and Effie stood by her side, with her small white hands clasped caressingly around her neck. They were singing together a sweet air, and the words accompanying it were those which Effie had warbled long, long ago, ere her heart had felt one pang of grief or bereavement. She was thinking of him, her absent brother, who had taught her that song. Of his present fate she knew nothing, and the thought that even then he might be filling a stranger's grave in a foreign land, brought a gush of tears to her eyes, and she turned her head away lest they should attract the notice and interrupt the melody of her happy cousin. One short, quick cry of joy and surprise, and Effie Landon fell senseless into the extended arms of her brother. William Landon had returned again to his childhood's home, enjoying all the freshness and vigor of youth and health, and accompanied by his friend, the noble and generous Frank Sutherland.

It was a sad return to Landon, and a feeling of desolation, such as he had never known before, came over him as he stood once more upon the threshold of "Home, sweet Home." He could not speak, for his noble heart seemed well nigh breaking, and he bowed his head upon the shoulder of his unconscious sister, and gave vent to a torrent of tears.

That night sleep was a stranger in the old parsonage, and hearts were throbbing alternately with joy and sorrow, regret and thankfulness.

Days and weeks passed pleasantly by, and bright beautiful summer was giving place to the sober hues of autumn, and still Frank Sutherland and Helen Hargrave remained at the

parsonage. The attraction there was mutual, for neither seemed inclined to depart. And Helen had even written to her parents expressing a desire that they would defer their proposed visit to Elmwood for the present, as she was so enchanted with it, as to wish to prolong her stay.

It was a glorious evening in the golden harvest month, and Frank Sutherland drew the willing hand of Helen within his own, and strolled out beneath the graceful elms to enjoy the beauties of the scene, and whisper into her listening ear words of devoted love.

Effie was sitting alone by the vine-shaded window, thinking of the eve long ago, when her mother sat there, watching the deepening shadows of the twilight until her mind revelled in visions amid the glories of the spirit land. Tears were gathering in her soft blue eyes, when a hand was laid gently upon her shoulder. Effie looked up, and met the dark eyes of her brother bent tenderly upon her.

"Effie," he said, seating himself by her side, and taking her hand, "Effie, we have both been deceived in our first love, and so we can sympathise with each other. We have grown up from childhood together, and why should we ever be separated until death calls us to our final resting place? Will you, can you transfer the love another has spurned to one who will prize it above everything else that the world can bestow? Effie, will you be my wife, and still remain in this place to cheer and bless me?"

"In giving you my heart and hand," said Effie, "I shall transfer no love that another has spurned. Long ago, when I believed you my brother, you possessed the first, purest, and holiest love of my heart. I loved Walter Seymour, to be sure, but not with that deep holy love which I first gave to you; and oh! how sweet the thought, after all the trials, disappointments and bereavements through which I have passed, that I can safely repose in your love. I have no fears of treachery or deception there; no fears of trust or confidence betrayed. Yes, William Landon, I am thine, wholly and forever thine! and this is the happiest moment of my life," she said, as she buried her face in her hands and wept tears of heartfelt joy.

There was a double wedding at Hargrave Hall on the anniversary of our national holiday; for Frank Sutherland and William Landon received from Captain Hargrave their young, beautiful, and trusting brides. Helen was superbly attired in

satin and jewels well befitting her station; and she looked peerless as a royal bride, beside the noble and handsome husband of her choice. Her soft chestnut hair glittered with gems, and over it floated a veil of rich Mechlin lace, like a vapory cloud, falling in gossamer folds even to her feet.

Effie, like a fresh, modest violet, stood by her side, arrayed in pure white muslin, with a simple wreath of orange flowers twined among the curls which shaded her fair brow and dimpled shoulders. This was the garb she had chosen, notwithstanding the entreaties of her aunt and cousin to the contrary, as best befitting the bride of an humble country parson, for her soul had no loftier aspirations.

At the close of the ceremony, Captain Hargrave stepped forward, and gave as a bridal present a hundred thousand dollars to each of his daughters, as he persisted in calling Effie his child. To Sutherland the gift was nothing, as his own wealth was immense, but to Effie it was indeed a fortune, for it would raise her husband from the cares and drudgery attendant upon a country life.

William Landon was soon installed pastor of the church, over which his venerable father had so long presided, in accordance with the wishes of the good people of Elmwood, who had reserved this honor to the son, as a token of the love and respect they retained for their former faithful minister.

Everything was preserved in its antique and primitive beauty at the old parsonage; there was no re-modelling or re-fitting, save that which comfort and necessity demanded. The old housekeeper still presided over the domestic affairs, and Effie, a wife within the home of her childhood, was as happy as in other days.

Frank Sutherland, still the inseparable friend of Landon, erected a magnificent country house in the sweet little village of Elmwood, doubly endeared to him as the home of his friend, and the place of his first meeting with his beautiful bride. No regrets were theirs, and their lives passed on pleasantly as a cloudless summer's day.

## CHAPTER XIX.

Far away within the gloomy walls of a western prison, a manly form bends moodily over his pallet of straw. One hand, besmeared with filth, clutches frantically his dark hair, matted and clotted with blood. A fearful and deathly pallor rests upon his brow, bared to the faint light that peeps timidly through the narrow casement. A strange, fearful gleam occasionally flits through the dark, piercing eyes, and then fades into an expression of utter despair.

Visions of childhood and youth are crowding through his half-distracted brain. A vine-clad cottage comes first upon the broad, moving panorama, where a tall, graceful and beautiful woman, clad in the habiliments of widowhood, bends tearfully over a handsome but wayward boy.

He was "the only son of his mother, and she a widow." Oh! how the soft voice that breathed those words into his ear haunts him yet, like the knell of crushed hopes and a broken spirit. That wayward child—how rapidly the scene changes, and he stands, a youth, beneath the porch of his childhood's home. How haughtily he throws back the soft hand that has pressed so beseechingly his manly brow! How mockingly his clear, careless laugh rings out, as the tears gush forth afresh from a mother's kindly heart! How firm and stately his step, as he waves a careless adieu to his sorrowing mother! And then again comes that soft tremulous voice, murmuring,

"The only son of his mother, and she a widow."

The canvas moves on again—he appears in the shadowy twilight of a summer's eve. A pale, fragile girl stands beside him. Her head droops and a shower of scalding tears falls unrepressed over her wan cheek.

"Harry, dear Harry, tell me—Oh, say it but once from your own beautiful lips, that it is false, and all the world beside cannot shake my confidence in you."

She raised her deep, spiritual eyes to his—Oh, so trustingly, so beseechingly, that the glance of the dark-eyed youth quailed beneath it.

"Harry," she continued, "it was not lightly that you won my love, a poor, friendless, and forsaken orphan that I was. You were so much my superior, bidding fair to be eminent in the profession you had chosen, I feared at first that when an admiring throng crowded around you, with words of applause, that you would forget the obscure orphan; but your persever-

ance, your fond and tender pleadings, did, at last, triumph, and I loved. I love as none may ever love again. Love? Nay, it is adoration, idolatry, changeless, pure, and stronger than life itself."

"Oh, no," he answered, with a voice so indifferent and cold that it seemed to strike a death chill to her trusting heart; "you will soon forget me, and be happy with another. It will be stooping somewhat from my lofty position to wed one so obscure. Rose—Miss Vinton, I am not insensible to your worth and virtue; but a change, I must confess, has 'come over the spirit of my dream.' What you have heard from other lips is no fiction," and he waved a farewell and turned coldly away.

Rose Vinton sank, weeping, upon the cold, damp turf, and gloomy twilight shuts out the fearful scene.

Again he appears on the canvas, tall, graceful, and manly. His dark eye flashes with the light of intellect and conscious superiority. Glossy hair, of midnight darkness, lies in rich, heavy masses over his broad brow. His step is light and elastic, as he moves midst scene after scene of gayety and pleasure. Bright eyes flash, soft cheeks glow, and young hearts throb wildly at his approach. He sways the hearts of the multitude, he wins and basks in the love of innocence, fearless of a rival, and then spurns it, as a worthless thing. Suddenly a dark cloud obscures the dazzling sunlight, and for a time he is lost to the view. Then, the frowning walls of a gloomy prison appears; and in a dark, damp cell a form is crouching in moody silence, and, were it not for the monitor within, he would scarcely be certain of his own identity, so repulsive, so loathsome he now seems.

Then without the prison walls he beholds a scaffold, and fancies himself led by unrelenting men, until he stands beneath the fatal noose. He sees the robe and cap, so appalling to the trembling culprit, and hears the hum of voices, rising from that sea of swaying forms beneath; but above all comes that sweet, tremulous voice, piercing his very soul—

"The only son of his mother, and she a widow."

"Oh! who can describe the unspeakable anguish, the horror of that one moment! The cold sweat starts to his haggard brow, and he yearns for a friendly tear to cool the scorching lava that burns to the inmost depths of his guilty soul.

"No reprieve! no reprieve!" seems to mock his wild pleadings for mercy, and he is sinking back in despair when the door of his gloomy cell grates upon its rusty hinges.

"My hour has come," he mutters, and tries to nerve himself for his fearful doom.

"You are at liberty now, stranger," said the jailor, approaching and grasping him by the arm, to see if he were yet under the influence of the inebriate's cup, or the nightmare, for he sat immovable, and apparently as senseless as the granite blocks of his prison walls.

"You are at liberty," he again shouted, as he shook him lustily with his sinewy arm.

"At liberty did you say?" inquired the culprit, half aroused from his stupidity, and doubting even his bewildered senses. "Then I am not a criminal, doomed to exe--exe--"

"I don't know how criminal you are, nor what you are doomed to. I have no further orders concerning you at present. You were caught napping last night under a lamp-post, and my orders were to place you in safe keeping until you were sufficiently sober to take care of yourself; for which act I think I deserve at least your thanks."

"And you shall have them," he said, grasping with frenzied cordiality the rough hand of the jailor, as the whole truth flashed vividly upon his now calmer mind. "And God of heaven, I thank thee, too!" he continued, as he fell upon his knees, and offered up the first heartfelt prayer that ever his lips had uttered.

\* \* \* \* \*

Again, that sweet vine-clad cottage appears to our view. It looks more venerable than when we last saw it, crowned as it is with gray moss, where the untrained woodbine still clings like an old unchanging friend, over the somewhat dilapidated roof.

The last rays of the setting sun are streaming through the broken trellis work by the old porch, where the mother, in days gone by, bent in love over her wayward boy. There she kneels now, that mother, paler and thinner, and her voice softer and more tremulous than when we saw her last; and she prays, oh, how fervently, for her absent son. Tears are coursing down her wan cheek, mingling with the night-dews that fall around her. Her voice rises in fervency as faith lifts the veil that shrouds the throne of the immaculate, and as the mercy and power of the great I AM burst upon her spiritual vision, she wrestles still in prayer for her absent one.

A white-winged seraph steals out from the golden gates of its spirit home, and away, away it floats on a fleecy cloud,

until it rests midst the sunset hues around the widow's cot. Her soul imbibes the holiness of that heavenly visitant, and her supplications end in one unbroken peal of thankfulness and praise.

"Mother, behold your son!"

What voice is that which comes like the rushing of mighty waters over her bewildered brain, thrilling every fibre of a mother's heart. That voice--she has heard it before, and she rises with wild and frantic joy from her kneeling posture.

"Your prayers have prevailed; you have wrestled in faith with the holy of holies for your absent boy, and like the prodigal of old, I return again to the home of my childhood. Mother, behold your son!"

His manly arms are extended, and her head droops upon the heaving breast of her only child.

There was joy that night in the widow's cottage and the widow's heart. And neighbors and friends gathered around that old porch to mingle their joyful congratulations with the words of welcome that fell from the mother's lips. And there was joy in heaven. For that white-winged seraph soared softly away from that scene, and bore on her snowy pinions the glad tidings of re-union and peace.

And the widow's heart was comforted, for her son "that was lost was found, and he that was dead was alive again."

Harry, or as we shall call him, Walter Seymour, became an eminent preacher of the gospel, a comfort and staff to the declining years of his christian mother, whom he reveres next to the God he loves and worships.

He sways the multitude with his deep eloquence, as they sit in wrapt admiration beneath his glowing descriptions of the Christian's hope. Many a heart warms, and many a bright eye kindles, and many a mother's heart is comforted, as words like "apples of gold in pictures of silver," drop from his lips, when he tells them of the power and efficacy of a mother's prayers.

\* \* \* \* \*

Walter Seymour sought out his beautiful Rose, whose first pure love he had won and then so cruelly slighted, and honorably offered her his heart and hand.

Rose had grown up a noble, intellectual, and gifted woman, loved and revered for her virtue and piety. Many a noble youth had sought the gifted orphan, but she never loved again. And when Walter Seymour, the eminent divine, humbly sued

for her hand, she laid it trustingly within his own, and answered :

"I am yours forever ; my love knows no change, save that it rises from one degree to another."

He soon after led her to the hymenial altar, and never have either regretted the hour that made their destinies one.

As soon as Clara Aubrey had completely recovered from her illness, she relinquished all claim to her father's estate, and taking that which had been redeemed from the wreck by Ernest Normand, removed to a distant city, where she plunged, with all the recklessness of an unprincipled mind, in the whirlpool of fashionable pleasure, captivating the hearts of the coxcombs that followed in her train, and then recklessly casting them away for other victims.

At last, an aristocrat, professedly of the first water, bowed humbly at her shrine, imploring her "to compassionate his distresses, and accept the honor of his hand and name, which had never yet been marred by dishonor or cowardice ;" to which she proudly assented, hoping that she had now made a conquest which would compensate for the loss of her noble lovers.

Her present suitor was reputed wealthy, and then—"such a magnificent name ! worth all the Landons, Sutherlands and Normands in the universe."

No money was spared to make the bridal display all that her extravagant taste could desire ; then they left the city to spend the honey-moon amid the resorts of fashionable pleasure-seekers. Mrs. Fitshomer was indeed a superb creature, moving like a queen through scenes of gaiety and splendor, dazzling all beholders, demanding and receiving homage from the passing throng.

The honey-moon had somewhat advanced, and Fitshomer talked evasively of returning with his bride to his magnificent estate in the sunny south. But before he could make up his mind to leave the metropolis, (until the gay season was over,) a suspicious looking personage, with a star on his hat and another on his breast, entered their magnificent lodgings and arrested the honorable Mr. Fitshomer, or rather, as the sheriff called him, Tom Timberly, for forgery and theft from his master, the only real and honorable Mr. Fitshomer, of New Orleans.

This was truly a dilemma for the peerless lady, who had already soared so high above the common herd, in anticipation

of the honor that awaited her in the home of her illustrious lord. She knew of no other way for a momentary escape from the mortifying scene than by going off into a fit of hysterics, which she did in the most graceful and approved manner.

Tom Timberly had his trial, and to expiate his crime, was sentenced to an apprenticeship of five years in the State Prison, to which place he was escorted immediately, after an interesting interview with his adored Mrs. Fitshomer, to whom he condescended to leave the honor of his illustrious name.

Mrs. Fitshomer had no time to spend in hysterical felicity now, for she found on investigation that her purse was getting decidedly low, and an enormous bill for their board had already been presented with a polite request that the money might be immediately forthcoming.

Here was another dilemma, from which her ingenuity could devise no honorable escape. Hysterics would not avail with that landlord, and so she crowded her jewels and the most valuable articles of her wardrobe into the smallest possible compass, and bribed a black man to take her away in disguise, into an obscure part of the city, leaving as a memento for the illustrious patronage with which he had been honored, any number of empty trunks and bandboxes.

Well, Clara Aubrey, Mrs. Fitshomer, you have begun to drink of the bitter cup, and while you are tasting drop by drop, to the very dregs, we will leave you till a more convenient season, to help swell the pages and give zest to another volume.