

# DOVECOTE;

OR,

## THE HEART OF THE HOMESTEAD.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "CAP SHEAF."

*[George Canning Hill]*

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## PREFATORY.

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THE following pages, while they professedly pursue the fortunes of a poor waif of the world, are especially intended to paint those dear old pictures of home life, at the thought of which every healthy heart beats faster with delight, and every true nature reaches impatiently forward for their realization.

The story makes pretension to little more than a simple narrative, aided by none of the adjuncts of dramatic form or spirit. If it interests, it will do so only by its own naturalness and truth. Ingrafted upon it, the reader will find the quiet dreams at the hearth, the glowing visions in the woods and on the hills, the sweet memories that swarm in the old garret and barns, and the pleasant meditations that flow out of the heart, by the brook and the river. These form—so the writer considers—the very *heart* of the book, that will keep alive and warm the whole body of the story. If there is too much enthusiasm in them, it at least is honest, begot of nothing but the writer's honest purpose.

People are all very much like birds, in so far as they are given to nest building. Some build nests of hopes, and perch them so high that little is the wonder the winds and rains beat them, in time, to pieces. Some build nests of fears, and, like the foolish ground birds of the pastures, squat them where they might most tremble for their being trod upon. Only a few, I ween, build nests of memories, like the doves about the old barns, or the swallows under the home eaves, or the redbreasts among the apple trees.

I have been building here only a nest of memories.

It is a home nest—into which any one may look from out his chamber window. If it is large enough for but a single world-wearied heart to brood in, it will not have been built in vain.

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# DOVECOTE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### ADrift.

THE winds of a cold March had been blowing all day through the streets of the metropolis, making travellers hug their cloaks tighter about them, driving like a pack of hungry hounds in full chase down the narrow alleys, and across the broader streets and avenues, shaking mercilessly the rattling windows as if they would get in at the houses, piping at the keyholes and crannies of the doors, howling about the chimney tops, and finally scurrying away in broken legions over the desolate looking bay, seaward.

The whole month, dreary as it was, had not produced a day more dismal and uncomfortable than this. The sun had at times shone out very faintly and sickly, and then gone sorrowfully in again. Little pools stood every where along the gutters, scum over with a thin crust of ice that was far from resembling crystal. The horses that drew the lumbering stages up and down the streets held down their heads against the cutting winds, and crept along on their courses with a sort of sullen resolution, as if they felt that they had earned their shelter long ago.

Men walked briskly past each other, with red cheeks and blue noses, exchanging looks through their watering eyes, and seeming to inquire, one of another, "What brought *you* out on such a day as this?" The boys did not stop on their way from school to gaze in at the windows of the shops at new prints and engravings, but hurried along homewards, some of them shouting as if to drown the sound of the wind in their ears. Now here, now there, the mad winds drove; gathering their forces at the public park, and by concert separating to charge boldly down and across every street and alley that came in their way.

The signs kept creaking dolefully in the more unpretending thoroughfares, and the little shopkeepers walked often to the doors, looking up and down to see if there might be any customers. Newsboys, and beggar girls, and ragged *chiffoniers* were all that rewarded their anxious pains. One class was trying to outcry the winds; another was straggling along here and there with low moans from colorless lips; and the third went grubbing doggedly up and down the frozen gutters, mumbling over syllables that had no meaning even for themselves.

There was one house, hidden in the very heart of the obscure streets, where the rigors of this March day were felt in all their severity. It was a high and narrow building, all of wood, with its paint entirely washed away by the winds and rains. The windows were very narrow, and looked as if they might in other times have possibly served for loopholes. Dormer windows stuck out like humps all over the roof, affording to many a poor family all the light by which they knew the passing days. The door was low, and the lintels wanted paint badly; and along the darkened passage were

walls that might once have boasted of whiteness, but had now taken the most picturesque combinations of color imaginable.

Along at the farther end of this dreary passage streamed faintly a light. It betrayed the locality of a flight of wooden stairs, by which one climbed to the second floor of this human hive. Another passage, narrow and nearly as dark as the first—a turn again—and a second flight of stairs took you to the floor above. At the head of this flight was living—and but just living—a pale, thin, ghostly woman, who still lay upon her scant bed in the farther part of the room. It was not an apartment that could make any special boast of the comforts it had in store, being carpetless except in the corner near the bed, having no more furniture than was just sufficient to meet the every-day necessities of her life, with little fire throwing out its genial warmth from the fireplace, and the dispiriting atmosphere of sickness breathing every where around.

The woman must have seen better days, for the lineaments of her face proved that she was born to them. A little child stood at the bedside, whose hand she held gently in her own thin and shadowy hand, and to whom she addressed words of consolation. Yet it seemed that a trouble was on her heart, and that neither effort nor resignation could suffice to remove it all.

"Milly," said she, in her low and sepulchral tone, that struck like a clod upon the child's feelings,— "Milly, you should know it all, and know it from *me*; I am going to leave you soon. I must die!"

"O mother! my mother!" exclaimed the weeping child, clasping tighter her mother's hand, while she leaned her head over upon the bed to hide her hot tears, "you must *not* leave me! You must *not* die!"

Where shall I go then? Who will take care of me when you are gone? No, no, mother; if you die, I shall die too. I cannot live without you!"

"There is a God, Milly, who tempers the wind to the shorn lambs. *He* will take care of you. Only be resigned to whatever he may do. All will be for your good at the last. Learn to trust to him, and he will hold you safely in his hand."

"O, what shall I do when you are gone, mother? No, no! you must not die, mother! You shall not die! Look up now, dear mother, and say that you are better. It will make you *feel* better. I *know* that you will live. What can I do in the world without you?"

The patient parent—made more resigned to whatever might come through the discipline of her affliction—calmly surveyed her offspring through her aching eyes, and sent up a silent but fervent prayer to Heaven for strength to bear it all. She felt within herself that her last hours were slipping away. Something forewarned her heart of her speedy end. She could not have told others what this premonition was; yet it wrought none the less forcibly on her thoughts.

"You must be gentle as you always have been, after I am gone," continued she, with much difficulty, laying her hand affectionately on her child's head. "There will be no need of repining, Milly. Only leave all your trials with God, and do your duty yourself. Keep my memory fresh in your heart. You will never forget your dear mother, will you, Milly?"

The question was put so tenderly, and in a tone of such deep sorrow, that the girl burst out afresh in tears, and sobbed and moaned so bitterly that her distress filled the whole apartment.

It was just as night was gathering—night after this

most dismal of all days. The shadows began to creep down from the roofs, down—down the sides of the houses, and were then crowding gloomily at her windows. The fire on the hearth was low, apt type of the pulse that just kept itself alive in the wasting invalid. The ashes had turned white upon the last stick, collecting in flakes, and then crumbling away. Beside the hearth stood a kettle; but no one had as yet filled it with water for boiling, and no one had been in to replenish the fire.

The poor woman ever and anon threw up her eyes to the wall, as if in secret prayer. What would not have been her comfort in that hour of agony, if her child could but have laid her heart against her own, and both gone through this great inward struggle together! How much deeper would have been the satisfaction with which she was going down to the grave, to know that the lonely heart she left behind was thoroughly impressed with all that she had communicated! Yet, for a child, Milly had comprehended much, though grief so cruelly took possession of her soul. She could point to no love so demonstrative and so tangible as that she bore her mother. When her eyes closed, the sun of her little life would seem to be put out altogether.

As night closed about this saddening scene, and while mother and child were in their silent sorrow thus giving up the secrets of their hearts to each other, the door of the apartment opened, and a woman entered, bearing a light.

"Why, Miss Markham!" exclaimed the person entering; "I had not forgotten about you; but I'm so behindhand! I'm afraid you've suffered from want of me."

"I do not complain, Mrs. Stokes," returned the pa-

tient. "I feel that you are too kind to me already. I hope you will live to get your abundant reward."

"O, never talk of that, Miss Markham. It is not worth talkin' of. All I do is little enough at the most; I'm sure I wish I could do more."

"May you find some kind hand to smooth your descent to the grave as you have done so tenderly for me!"

"Do'n't go to takin' on so, Miss Markham, I beg of you; for there's no use of talkin' of dyin', when one's nowhere near his end. You ought to keep up your spirits, Miss Markham—I'm sure. You oughter, if only for little Milly's sake."

This remark served but to redouble the child's distress. Her grief had reached such a point of control over her, that the least kind allusion to her situation, or the first syllable of sympathy from another, immediately set her heart in new commotion, and caused her burning tears to flow afresh.

"Mrs. Stokes," calmly returned the invalid, "I have told Milly all, as I thought it my duty. She knows as well as myself that I am about to die. I have told her, that she might be prepared for the worst."

"Miss Markham," exclaimed the kindly-meaning woman, "you shouldn't!"

"I have no one to leave her with, Mrs. Stokes; and it is that that mostly troubles me. She must not go into the streets to beg! She *must* not do that! God have pity on the poor orphan!"

"La! don't worry for that, Miss Markham, I beg you; I will take her myself!"

"But you have all you can provide for now. No, no, it will be too hard for you."

"Can't she *help* me, Miss Markham, I want to know? Can't she do *something*? But you ain't a-goin' to leave

her, Miss Markham. You mustn't think of dyin'. It's no use. It'll only fret you sooner into the grave; and every one's grave is ready for 'em as soon as they hurry themselves into it."

Mrs. Stokes—rude in the very gentleness of her heart—prepared to get supper, of which the child could not finally taste, and to which her mother did no more justice than merely to sip of the tea that had been made so nicely for her. It was the saddest of all times; for night had come down with its mysteries, and bedtime for Milly drew near. It was only after a fervent prayer had been offered by Mrs. Markham, still clasping her arm tenderly about the neck of her child, and only after she had again and again imprinted a kiss upon her forehead, that she could consent to dismiss her to bed, expressing the hope that she should see her again in the morning.

Mrs. Stokes was thoughtful enough to carry Milly to her own bed, in the next room. She had volunteered to sit up by her mother through the night, and thought it best that the child should rest without disturbance. If any thing unusual should occur, she could, if needed, awaken her.

It was a blustering, boisterous night, and little was the hope that it would bring relief for any who might be stretched on beds of sickness. It was not a time for weary spirits to get rest. They felt instinctively the influence of the shrieking winds.

A long night for Mrs. Stokes, too. She dozed in her chair, only to awaken herself by some sudden impulse or fear that gave her excessive pain. And she went through the trials of it all—her heart bending to the storm of its feelings, as the trees in the distant park bent before the blast of the storming winds.

The morning dawned, streaming in pale and faint at the dull windows. Mrs. Stokes still remained in the apartment. The door slowly and softly opened, and Milly came through, shutting it carefully behind her. She walked straight to the bedside. Her eyes rested upon the face of her motionless mother.

The kind nurse and neighbor stepped forward and took her gently by the arm, drawing her backward to where she had herself been sitting. Milly looked inquiringly in her face for an explanation of it all. She was much bewildered with what she saw.

"Your mother is dead! Poor child!" said Mrs. Stokes, in a whisper, and burst into tears.

## CHAPTER II.

### A WELCOME JOURNEY.

MILLY had gone through the fearful crisis, and her heart was yet unbroken. She had witnessed the last rites, and tearfully watched the solemn ceremonies. And now she was motherless; motherless — yet not altogether friendless.

Mrs. Stokes had for the time adopted her into her own family, — that consisted simply of herself, her son Billy, and the baby, — and appeared anxious to do all that lay in her power for the child's comfort. She chatted with her as often as her work allowed, and in her own honest way strove to lift the cloud of gloom that had settled upon her heart. She tried to interest her in "the baby," a chubby little article of domestic comfort, and was persevering enough to behold her wishes in some small degree realized. Billy, too, who cried newspapers through the day, offered her freely from the rich supply of his sympathy, and neglected no delicate means his mind could devise in which to rid her of ever so little of her grief.

There is no holier sight on earth than the pure, outgushing sympathy of children. It comes before the heart is overlaid with the coarser feelings that worldly life begets. It is free from the guile that selfishness breeds, and exhaustless as the pictured life that stretches before them. There is no need to separate its elements,

for all of them are as unmingled as the feelings with which their impulsive hearts are full.

In the little family of Mrs. Stokes, therefore, Milly was as happy as at that time she could have been any where. The recent sorrow, though by no means healed, would sooner become so here. Mrs. Stokes had been a friend of her mother, and so she was a friend of hers, too. She had already placed her second in her affections, if only for the kindness of her sympathies. And next came Billy, and then the baby. And in this quiet circle she daily ran round with her heart.

Billy was a sprightly and highly promising boy, but a year or two older than herself, and devoted to the interests and happiness of his mother. In the streets nearly all day, his presence was so much the more welcome at evening; when he insisted on holding the baby for at least an hour in his lap, often obliging his mother to wake her for that purpose. In his mind he had already planned a life for Milly, designing that she should stay with his mother as long as she lived, while all his own efforts should be redoubled to secure for her so pleasant a home. In his soul he was already a man; *more* a man than many who only wear the *name* of manhood.

The days were slowly slipping away, one not very much unlike another in its regular round of little incidents and experiences, and the suns became gradually warmer, diffusing their cheerfulness throughout the humble abode of Mrs. Stokes. There were beginning to be more hours of daylight, and more life in the streets, and more business every where. The spring was again thawing out the rills in the country fields, and the cold from the human heart. There was a secret sympathy in the heart for all this exhibition of new life, and, as

nature began to smile, the soul grew glad in spite of itself likewise.

Mrs. Stokes sat down beside Milly one afternoon, after her work was all done, determined, apparently, on communicating something she had lacked the courage to do before. So, without stopping to pave her way with preliminaries, she began.

"Milly," said she, "the night your mother died, she had a good deal to say to me about what would become of you, where you should go, and who should take care of you. I offered to keep you as long as you would be happy here, but she would not hear a word to any such thing as that. She made me promise a solemn promise, Milly, before she died, that I'd take you, just as soon as matters would permit, to your uncle's to live. I promised her, because she made me. Milly, I'd love dearly to have you stay with me; but as long as it was your mother's wish, you know, for me to take you to your uncle's, why, I don't see as I can help doin' of it. It was *this* that I've been so long wantin' to tell you, but I hated to trouble your mind with any *more* sorrow than what you'd had put on it. You *know* I'd love to have you stay, Milly, and so would Billy, and I *guess* so would the baby."

"Where does my uncle live?" asked Milly, scarcely able as yet to comprehend the entire meaning of her unexpected communication.

"He's a *rich man*," she said, "and he lives back a good many hundred miles in the country. It's Byeboro' where he lives, and it's there that she wanted me to take you."

"But, perhaps he won't *want* me?" suggested the child, eager at the outset to frame objections to the plan.

"Your mother said he could not refuse to take you,

and I promised her, as solemn and sacred as any body could, that I'd see her wish carried out. No doubt you'll be better off there, for he's your mother's own brother, and he's rich. You can't *want* there, Milly, and you *might* here."

"I don't want to leave *you*," said the child, looking up at the kind woman through her tears.

Mrs. Stokes couldn't bear it, and drew her affectionately to her breast.

"It'll be for your good, Milly. Think of *that*, it'll be for your good; and, besides, it was your mother's dying wish. Won't you go, Milly, if I'll go with you?"

"Shall I have to go to-morrow?" innocently asked the child, and cast her eyes thoughtfully about the room, as if even then taking her sad leave of it.

"We'll wait till it's some warmer, I guess," cheerfully answered Mrs. Stokes, "and then the cars and the stages'll be ready for us."

And forthwith she changed the topic for one better calculated to inspirit both herself and her little friend.

But Time never halts with his sack at his back to beg for favors. He trudges remorselessly on, waiting for none. The morning of their departure came at last. Billy had risen much earlier than usual, and lighted the fire, and hung the teakettle, and was waiting with a swelling heart to bid the little girl good-by. Mrs. Stokes could scarcely eat of the meal she had prepared, though she kept telling Milly that she must eat all she could get down, for it would be a long ride for them, and little would be the dinner they could get besides what they carried. The baby slept; no one had wakened it. A neighbor had promised to now and then look in upon it, to see that all went on well, while Billy himself had for the time intrusted his business on the

thoroughfares to another boy, designing to stay at home for a couple of days with the little charge that was left behind.

They were all equipped at last — Mrs. Stokes, with her large red shawl on, with a single notable figure exactly in the middle of the back, and Milly in her hood and faded silk pelisse. Milly had kissed the baby over and over again while it lay asleep, and Billy had run out to get the kind neighbor to watch it, that he might accompany them to the depot. Milly looked about her sadly, and the tears dropped from her eyes.

"Keep up heart," cheerfully spoke Mrs. Stokes, scarcely knowing how to keep up her own.

It was a long and a weary walk to the cars, though Milly saw much to attract her attention by the way. When they reached the long building just outside which the engine stood smoking and steaming away, Mrs. Stokes, it must be confessed, was in hardly less confusion than Milly. She ran this way and that among the people who thronged the platform, as if the success of the whole trip, for *that* train, at least, depended altogether upon her going. Billy alone was collected. He was used to crowds, and made his home in the heart of a confusion.

"Can you tell me which is the second-class cars, sir?" ventured she, addressing a gentleman in whose way she happened to come.

"You'll find some one to show you, that way," answered he, pointing quickly with his hand.

"I could tell you as much as *that*, mother," interrupted Billy, perhaps a little moved by the lack of confidence she seemed to have in the amount of his general information.

The bell rang a sharp, clear ring on the frosty morn-

ing air. There was more talking among the people, and more confusion. Every body seemed to be shaking hands with somebody else at the car windows, and saying parting words. The train began to move slowly. At first it could hardly be perceived that it moved at all.

Billy waved his hat to his mother, and said good by to Milly, and stood like a statue on the platform, watching the train till it dragged its snake-like length swiftly away, and finally disappeared round a curve in the distance. Then he turned his face homewards, his hands still in his pockets, and his head thoughtfully to the ground.

There have been saddened people in the world long before Billy Stokes came into it, but it may be very readily questioned if ever a sadder being than he took final leave of a friend. He had known Milly in her sore trials — and that is a time when acquaintance is thorough. About her little distresses all his own tender sympathies had been intertwined, till, with her living too, in the same house with himself, he had come to regard her with all the affection of a brother for a sister.

The day looked dark and dismal to him, though it was yet early morning, and the sun was shining brightly along the streets. People were stirring every where, and bowing and smiling to each other as they passed. How like a very mockery did all this seem to the heart of the little newsboy, on his way back to his desolate home!

### CHAPTER III.

#### VISITING ONE'S RELATIONS.

It was just at sunset when the mail coach set down Mrs. Stokes and her charge at the gate near the roadside, and the country mansion of Mr. Trevelyn, the uncle of Milly, was visible through the trees, that had lately begun to leaf. As the vehicle rolled away, leaving them still standing by the roadside, Mrs. Stokes began to look about her in honest astonishment. There was nothing that her active vision did not take in. From the distant chimneys to the gatepost at her hand, her eye swept with one of the most comprehensive looks imaginable.

Milly was lost. She lacked that self-possession that was manifestly a prominent part of good Mrs. Stokes's character, and so stood without purpose, and almost without wish. If she had *any* desire just at that particular moment, it was to get through this unwelcome business as quick as possible. So, even while Mrs. Stokes lingered and looked, Milly remarked, in a half-impatient tone, —

"Let's go in *now*."

"Certain, my child," responded Mrs. Stokes, apparently just come to herself. "*Certain* will we go in. I've begun to wish *I* could live here, too, Milly. How happy you'll be! You won't want for nothing in the world."

She opened the gate, and both went through, follow-

ing the sinuous path through the trees and shrubbery to the door.

The residence of Mr. Trevelyn was the finest in all the town of Byeboro'. It stood a little more than a mile from the village, and had earned the character of the pleasantest locality in that part of the country.

The house itself was set back at some distance from the road, and, in the summer, shaded profusely with the foliage that was made to grow up to its very windows. A high veranda was built about its three sides, on one of which was a conservatory of choice plants, where the humming birds occasionally ventured to draw their little stores. It had a highly imposing appearance from the road, and certainly failed not to create the same sort of impression from within. In the rear stretched away a fine tract of well-cultivated ground, where Mr. Trevelyn raised his vegetables for his table, and his wife gave orders to the gardener.

They reached the end of the walk, and went round to the back door. The first person they met was the maid.

"Good evenin'," offered the ready Mrs. Stokes. "Is Mr. Trevelyn to home?"

"Yes, he is," said the servant, eying Milly sharply.

"I should like to see him," spoke Mrs. Stokes, very promptly.

"Come round then to this door, will you?" returned the servant; and led the way on the outside to the side entrance of the house.

Mr. Trevelyn at length reached the door, and looked inquiringly at his new visitors. He was a fine-looking man, with an open expression of countenance, and easy manners.

Mrs. Stokes did not wait to be asked her business, but fell to it without delay.

"Is this Mr. Trevelyn?" asked she.

He only bowed in assent, folding again the paper he had been reading.

"I've come here," continued Mrs. Stokes, "because I promised your sister that I'd come."

"My sister!" exclaimed he.

"Yes, sir; Miss Markham."

"Emily! Where is she? I'm glad to hear of her! Where is she?"

"It's a sorry story, sir, I've got to tell. She's dead, sir. She —"

"Dead! Emily dead! When was it? Where did she die?"

The astonishment of the gentleman was uncontrollable.

But Mrs. Stokes went through the narration of his sister's last illness, together with all the particulars of her death, and the promise she solemnly made her to see that Milly was safely placed in the care of her uncle. It was a touching story, and the brother attempted not to conceal the depth, or the sincerity, of his grief.

"And this child is Milly, that you speak of?" he asked.

Mrs. Stokes assured him that she was.

"Poor orphan!" exclaimed he, in a half whisper, and led them into an anteroom, bidding Mrs. Stokes sit down with Milly, while he went in to talk with his wife.

He found Mrs. Trevelyn in the parlor, watching the plants in the conservatory. She was standing alone before the window. Without hesitation or a length of preliminary, he told her of the new matter thus put upon his hands; expressing his earnest desire, at the

same time, that the child be cordially adopted into his family, and made a component part of the same.

Mrs. Trevelyn at once raised her hands.

"If you seek to make a *slave* of me, Mr Trevelyn——"

"No, Sarah; I do not; I desire no such thing."

"One would think we had family enough of our own, without taking in other persons' children!"

"It is an unusual case," said her husband. "Her mother was my only sister. She died poor,—in *want*, for what I can learn to the contrary,—and I did not help her. What can I do less now than take her child?"

"Or any body else's child!" put in Mrs. Trevelyn, with a flourish.

"Especially when it was her dying wish," he added. "How *can* I slight it! How can you permit me to think of such a thing!"

"Why," went on his wife, "if you design to have all the poor families that choose to come put upon your shoulders——"

"Wife! wife!" protested he, in a voice divided between sorrow and passion.

She certainly should have stopped there, for she had gone to the last limit allowed her. But she chose to go on.

"I say, Mr. Trevelyn, that I think you might think of doing a better business than boarding *beggars*!"

For a moment, the exasperated husband could not command himself to say any thing. Anger had got the mastery of his grief now. Before, consideration might safely have sat at the helm; now, nothing but impulsive feeling—possibly guided by good instincts, and possibly not—could have direction and sway.

"*Beggars*!" he muttered, turning on his heel, and stepping quickly to the middle of the room.

"Yes, why not? What else *are* such people, I should be glad to know?"

"Mrs. Trevelyn," returned he, "what was, I myself once? What were *you*?"

He had hit the nail exactly on the head now. "What were *you*?" was a question she might not altogether be delighted to answer.

"We may *all* be beggars at *some* time!" he continued. "Who knows? Who shall dare to say, 'hat, if he is rich to-day, he shall be rich to-morrow? Not *I*, for one!'"

"But if you wish to provide for this child——"

"I have determined to do it, ma'am," he interrupted.

"Then why not do it in some other way? Is it necessary to take in strangers, and every body, into your family?"

"She is my own sister's child!"

"Umph!" ejaculated Mrs. Trevelyn.

"That sister I could not assist when she most needed assistance, when I might possibly have saved her life, because I knew not where she was. She was a wanderer, long deserted by her husband, and dependent on her own exertions for her livelihood. When she died, her last wish was that I should adopt this child; and she's as pretty a child, too, as you'll find hereabouts. Do you think I can refuse to do what has been asked of me in this way, by a person so nearly related to me?"

Mrs. Trevelyn was silent, though her feelings evidently had undergone no change. She intrenched them safely within a sullen resolution. In good time it would exhibit its fruits.

"The child's mother had found out where I lived, it

seems," continued Mr. Trevelyn, "but her pride forbade her coming to me, as she ought to have done, for relief. I feel deeply for the sufferings she has been obliged to endure, and shall try to make up in some measure to her what I should have been glad to do in her lifetime. I shall take this child into my family."

He pronounced this final summing up of his determination with great emphasis, and immediately walked out of the room.

"Have your own way, then," returned his wife, though not loud enough for him to hear.

Mr. Trevelyn at once communicated to Mrs. Stokes the favorable conclusion at which he had arrived in the matter, and bade her take off her things and stay through the night with Milly. He conducted her to the apartment where the servants were to be found, and gave her into their care. Milly he took with himself into the parlor. The room, however, was vacant. Mrs. Trevelyn had made a precipitate retreat on first hearing his returning footsteps.

It was early the next morning when Mrs. Stokes took her leave of Milly and Mr. Trevelyn, — for she had seen no others while there, — and she kissed the child over and over again at the gate, lifting her in her arms. Mr. Trevelyn thanked her earnestly for the interest she had taken in the last wishes of his sister, and insisted on her acceptance of the roll of bank bills he fairly thrust into her hand. She received it with tears swimming in her eyes, and hoped God would never forget to reward the generosity of such a kind-hearted gentleman.

As the stage rolled off from the gate down the country road, she had her handkerchief to her eyes, and her lips were muttering in a low tone to herself, —

"Poor Milly! you've got a good home at last!"

## CHAPTER IV.

### NOT ALL GOLD THAT GLITTERS.

THIS is an adage we should be little inclined to offer the reader again, except as it seemed quite as pertinent to this place as it ever was to any other.

Milly might have fancied she had reached the heart of happiness now, because there was such plenty, even to profusion; but acceptable even as that may at all times be, it is nothing without its concomitants in comfort. Food and clothing are well enough as far as they go; but they certainly do not cover the whole question. The satisfying of the stomach is by no means the necessary provision of the heart, nor does it stand in the stead of security for the heart's happiness.

Mr. Trevelyn was much absent from home, particularly at this season. He had his property to look after in town, as well as in the country; and by far the larger part of it, of course, lay in the former locality. So that now Mrs. Trevelyn had full sway in the management of the friendless little orphan.

Prejudiced against the child herself, she had taken pains to instil the same feeling into the minds of her two daughters — Margaret and Ellen. These were still quite young, though several years in advance of Milly; and their principles, one would naturally think, might have been intrusted with better advantage to other hands.

For several days after her arrival, they scarcely

noticed her; merely going about with their childish pug noses turned up, as if that were the only way they had yet learned of testifying contempt. They hardly spoke to her even at the table; and then only because their father seemed to be determined to manufacture some sort of connecting link between them.

Mrs. Trevelyn had told them who she was, and where her mother had died, giving up the particulars with most wonderful minuteness, and adding thereto numerous embellishments.

"She was nothing but a beggar woman," she said, "and had died at last of want. It was all a vulgar affair," added she; and she quite wondered at Mr. Trevelyn for his readiness to take such a class of people into his house.

"For *my* part," returned Miss Margaret, "I shall never acknowledge her as any relation of mine!"

"Nor I either!" chimed in Ellen.

"I should hope my daughters had more *pride*," concurred Mrs. Trevelyn, "than to think of such a thing. Why, who *is* she? Why *should* you call her a relation? You have never known any thing of her, and have not so much as *seen* her mother!"

"I should think papa would hear to what *you* said about it," suggested Margaret, who was the elder of the sisters, and had just put on her budding airs.

"So should I, too," echoed Ellen.

"He will do no such thing," replied their mother, sharply. "He will do just as he wants to; and that is enough to make one perfectly miserable!"

The girls looked round at each other. It was not so much a look of astonishment as of inquiry. This was the first peep they had been permitted to take at the real state of the relations between their parents.

"Milly," said Mrs. Trevelyn, one day, "tell me what your real name is. It's not Milly, I *know*."

The child looked up at her in surprise.

"What name did your mother give you?"

"Only Milly," was her meek reply.

"Was ever such foolishness put into the heads of children?—and *poor* children, too!" exclaimed she, turning round upon her own daughters with a sneer on her face. As if, forsooth, a pretty name was not as much a fragrance in the hovel as the hall! As if only *money* could purchase natural licenses to appropriate the pleasant phrases and the sweet names to one's selfish use, while the *poor* must mob their words and names all disagreeably together! There is more of such a feeling among those whose gentility is but another name for their riches than might at first be readily received.

"What did your mother do for a living?" pursued Mrs. Trevelyn, determined to debase the child's feelings in the presence of her daughters. "Did she go picking rags out of the gutters? or did she sell oranges at the street corners?"

Milly thought of that mother then, just as she lay on the bed the last time she saw her alive. Her mind rapidly gathered up the last injunctions from her sainted lips, bidding her always to be gentle, and to trust to Heaven to carry her through all her trials. And as the recollection of all these things rushed over her, her heart swelled with its surcharging grief, and she sought immediate relief in a passionate flood of tears.

"Crying?" said Mrs. Trevelyn. "Then you're one of the crying sort, are you? I fancy your mother must have made a great pet of you, for a street beggar!"

The girls were really touched with what they saw; for there is no nature that is schooled to insensibility except by degrees, and Mrs. Trevelyn had the tuition of her children's hearts yet before her. They had, it is true, accomplished much in the way of imitation already; but if their mother intended for them a thorough course of training in her own peculiar characteristics, she had yet much to do.

"What did your mother do for you when you cried in that way?" said she, sneering again, for the benefit of her daughters.

"I never cried!" sobbed the child, scarcely able to speak distinctly.

"Ah, that indeed! Then I think we'll have none of it here! You may go out of the room."

Mrs. Trevelyn was cut with the pointed reply of Milly. It was the more pointed, from the sincerity and innocence of manner with which it was given.

Milly had no alternative, therefore, but to go out of the room. She found her way into the garden, and wandered off to its most remote quarters, till she finally reached a little coppice that skirted its border. To this rustic retreat she betook herself, sitting down upon a rock at the foot of a tree.

The spring was out in all its enticing freshness. From the boughs that interlaced above her head the tender buds had long ago burst, and tiny leaves of the most welcome and delicate green had started in all directions, fringing and ruffling the sprays as no hand less skilful than that of Nature herself could do it all. The air was soft and bland, and lightly stirred the auburn locks she had brushed away from her forehead with such care. There was quiet and peace every where about her. It was a welcome change from the feverish

feelings that had so lately oppressed her in the house. She was glad that she had come to this place.

More sadly than ever, though, came back to her the remembered words, and looks, and tones, and smiles of her mother. All the while her mind was contrasting the character of her aunt with that of her mother; and her heart told her there was something unnatural in the very comparison. She could with difficulty believe that there could be so much unhappiness, on the part of even one, where there was likewise such profusion and plenty.

A new glimpse of life broke on her vision. She began to understand the hollowness of appearances, and to measure the true shapes of realities. For a mind as young and untutored as hers, there was newly opened a storehouse of reflections that would be likely to last her through the whole of her life. And all the time she thought of these things she grew more and more saddened, until she quite wished that she could go at once where her mother had gone before.

In this state of feeling she had continued undisturbed for a long time. It was already near sunset, and the shadows were lengthening on the grass at her feet. The air was imperceptibly growing chill, and she should have returned to the house. But a summons reached her before she had thought of the hour. A servant spied her in her sylvan seclusion, and told her that Mrs. Trevelyn was looking for her.

Milly rose from the rock on which she had been sitting, and followed her slowly into the house.

Mrs. Trevelyn met her at the door.

"Where have you been, miss?" she sharply inquired, bestowing on her a highly threatening look.

"I found her way off in them woods yonder!" an-

swered the ready servant. "I don't see how she ever found the *way* out there!"

"What did you go there for?" persisted Mrs. Trevelyn. "What were you doing?"

"Nothing," meekly answered the child.

"Nothing? Yes, you must have been doing *something*! What was it?"

By this time Margaret and Ellen had come to the door, and were watching the termination of the matter with deep apparent interest. Mrs. Trevelyn found another opportunity for the advantageous display of her cruel tactics.

Milly did not seem inclined to reply to Mrs. Trevelyn's last question, which was very unfortunate for her.

"I bid you tell me what you was doing!" spoke she, still more sharply.

"Nothing," again answered Milly.

"Nothing? What a fool! Do you ever *think*? or don't you know how?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied the child, looking down at the ground.

"And didn't you *think* while you was out there?"

The girls thought this the best place to titter; which they did to their mother's thorough satisfaction.

"Yes, ma'am."

"What was you thinking of, then?"

The question had to be repeated.

"I don't wish to tell," said Milly, evasively.

"Don't wish to tell, eh? There's a lady for you, now! But you *shall* tell! I bid you tell me at once!"

Milly hesitated.

"Of course you were thinking how much better a life in the dirty streets was, than here in this beautiful

place, wasn't you? Of course you were thinking of your mother, and comparing her with *me*? Think of it, girls!"

It was unaccountable by what fatality Mrs. Trevelyn had fallen upon the exact train of the child's thoughts and feelings. Possibly a guilty conscience might have had something to do with it.

Milly told her that she *was* thinking of her mother, and that her thoughts were upon her often.

"And comparing her with *me*, I suppose?" persisted her tormentor.

"I couldn't *help* it, ma'am! Indeed, how could I?" exclaimed the child, and burst into tears.

"Well, which did you think you'd rather live with?"

"My mother! O, *my mother*!" answered Milly, in a passion of agony.

"Of course!" said Mrs. Trevelyn; and her daughters looked at each other, as if they fancied the dignity of their indulgent parent had already been fearfully compromised.

"Now go up to bed!" ordered the self-condemned woman. "Go at once! You shall go supperless, too, for your impudence!"

Milly was glad to escape from her presence, even on so light terms as these. She could not have eaten her supper, as she then felt, if it had been set before her. There was something she wished satisfied long before she thought of the demands of her appetite.

She therefore hurried to her little room, and flung herself upon her bed. She continued sobbing and calling moaningly on her mother, till she had finally sobbed and moaned herself to sleep. There was at least *one* chance of rest for a heart so tossed as hers; and that

was to be found in blessed sleep. In dreams she might be happy.

Such was a single example of the experience through which the child was obliged to go under the authority of Mrs. Trevelyn. The lady was reputed to be wealthy, in so far as she shared the wealth of her husband; but that must have been all.

## CHAPTER V.

### DOVECOTE.

Nor far retired from the little village of Kirkwood, a great many miles distant from the town in which the present fortunes of little Milly had been cast, and in another state, was our own dear homestead. We were all brooded there then, ignorant of trouble, and thoughtless of care.

The dew is in my heart, just as it used to lie on the rich grass about the old house, whenever I call up again the distinct image of that old home nest. I see its steep and mossy roofs, its shadowing elms, its odd, old-fashioned gables. They rise like a picture in my memory. The old light streams over them, and they stand out on the canvas anew. The windows still glow in the fire-light, and the stack of roofs in the rear rises to tell me of the divided joys of autumn evenings and rainy days.

Most homesteads have some notable peculiarities. Dovecote, as I know, had none, unless it might be that never a spot was so hallowed by affection — so endeared to the memory of its inmates, and so closely hedged about with precious associations. A plain and unpretending country house itself, it was more than a very palace in this. It held a mine of wealth, from which, though we all so freely drew, not the least, after all, seemed to be taken.

It was only a house after the old style, with quite all the comforts for which so many of those ancient struc

tures were distinguished. Beneath the stately elms that reached their long arms protectingly over it, as if calling down upon it a benison, it seemed the very resting-place of the heart; the nook whither many a weary one's desires may often have drifted; the still corner where a worn spirit might always hope to find repose.

It had a gable-roof, and peaked dormer windows, with sharp gables jutting out against the sky. A huge chimney, all of stone, rose above the whole like a massy turret, through whose stained and blackened vent sailed white and blue smokes to heaven, fragrant with incense of the happiness around the hearthstone below.

There was a garden for flowers before the front door, and beyond that stretched a broad green lawn of the thickest and freshest grass. The elms gathered themselves in groups at the head of the lawn, nearest the house, and thence scattered themselves irregularly over its entire surface, until they skirted the winding road below. Between two of these venerable trees was the gateway of the avenue.

In the rear the kitchen garden lay, loaded, in the season, with all the various esculents for which thrifty home gardens are apt to be noted. Time would fail me to tell of the beans, and the squashes, and onions, and melons, and sweet corn, and carrots, and turnips, and beets, or of the peas, and parsnips, and lettuce, and okra, and salsify, or of asparagus, and tomatoes, and celery, or so much as to mention the heaps of garden fruits, cherries, and plums, and pears, and peaches that were yearly gathered in from this little half acre.

In the fall time, the speckled and bright-eyed beans came in, and the reddest of peppers and tomatoes, looking for all the world as if they must have been painted one by one, were hung up about the store rooms and

kitchen from well-smoked beams, or strung, like fanciful Indian trinkets, across the rafters of the old garret; and the herbs were hung in well-assorted bunches to dry, and the vegetables all went into the warm and capacious cellar. It was a busy time with the whole of us, that harvest time in the garden. It kept the younger hands at work for days together, and so, of course, out of the mischief for which their fingers itched. And, in the spring again, there was so much rubbish to be cleared away and burned. Children always think such things awful, and the prospect fairly is that they ever will.

There was such a seemingly studied irregularity about the old house—it was absolutely charming. One room led you so unexpectedly into another; and the next room led—you knew not where; and the passages and halls were so intricate and rambling! One could play hide-and-seek among them half his days.

There were uncounted little recesses, and doorways, and projections with not the least imaginable design in the world, unless it might have been to confuse a stranger, and there was no denying that this plan was answered admirably. For every one who shared the hospitalities of Dovecote was in the regular habit of saying, in some jocular way or other, "I can find my way round here with a little pains; but, I declare, I can't find it *back again!*"

I used to wonder, when I wandered alone of a rainy day among the chambers and dim passages of the house, if it was not just on account of them that the place was called Dovecote.

There were large square rooms, with high walls, all the way wainscoted. The dining room, or, as it was usually called, the "keeping room," was the place where

we were wont oftenest to assemble. There the huge, fierce-looking fire-dogs reflected the ruddy glow of the fire in the winter. There we gathered about the cheerful table, spread with its snowy cloth, and loaded with the fat that the land annually yielded us. There we listened to sweet and olden stories until far into the evening, glancing from the dimming fire to the darkened window panes, and feeling, each of us, a child's true gratefulness that we had a home.

Next in order came the kitchen, with its wide-throated fireplace, large enough to sit in safely while the fire was burning; and its low ceiling hung fantastically with the last harvest fruits, and its bustle and business in the memorable baking and brewing days, and its heavy oak floor fastened down by huge nails with brightly-scoured heads, and its aromas, and steams, and appetizing fumes, always attracting children to make their usual discoveries. Servants moved briskly about there, from fireplace to table, and from table to fireplace again; and logs of immense size were rolled into the chimney throat; and dancing flames went roaring up the chimney, crackling, and snapping, and climbing agilely among the light sprays and branches of the brushwood, writhing and hissing, and laughing with the strangest imaginable laughter as they sped upwards, and filling all the apartment of a trying winter's day with visions of comfort, and plenty, and *home*. A kitchen, somehow, awakens the home feeling sooner than almost any other place.

In the yard, where the flower blooms first assured us of coming spring, almost every variety of home flowers blushed along the borders of the simple beds, or grouped themselves fantastically in the angles. There were snowdrops, and crocuses, four-o'clocks, and larkspurs,

lady's slippers, and bachelor's buttons, scattered plentifully up and down the walks and over the beds. And modest myrtles bloomed in the haunted shade of a few evergreens; while blushing morning glories—the favorite flower of my saintly grandmother—clambered up by the house, as if to be seen of her in their fresh beauty when she first opened her little bed-room window in the early summer morning.

Violets opened their mild eyes with the first warm breath of spring; and asters stood shivering against the wall, and down the path, till the late frosts of autumn. Hyacinths, in their pure white kirtles, colored like soft-eyed maidens, the belles of a quiet town. Daffodils grew thickly in all the strange varieties of their colors. And there was abundance of carnations. And beds of variegated pinks breathed out the sweetest fragrance. And there were healthy rose trees, too, in profusion, standing all about the yard, beneath the windows, at the house corner, and against the trellis work of the deep little porch. One was always enchanted with the place of a dewy morning in summer, when the sun first stretched his long red fingers over the eastern heights, painting the house, and the leaves, and the flowers all anew. There was not, surely, such another place the whole country round.

The clustered barns and other outbuildings made you think of a little settlement, where the edge of the cutting winds was taken off by their protecting barriers, and the heart became easy with a remembrance of the granaries that were full.

There were sloping pasture lands on the west and south-west, over which the silvery haze of the autumn days hung like an unspoken blessing. And far down to the south the damp fogs of winter and early spring

came blowing up through the valley between the hills, breathing their chilling breaths on the roofs of Dovecote, and making the dangling boughs of the old elms drip as with a plentiful rain.

In the woods were to be found an abundance of wild grapes, hanging in clusters from the intertwined vines, and crowning the top of some noble forest tree with a wreath of their purple fruitage. And there were such grand places to trap the wild game through the still autumn! We spent days together in the woods in this deeply-exciting occupation.

There were little brilliants of pools standing about in the lowlands, beside which grew the coarse brake, the flag, and the yellow lilycup; and upon whose marshy borders green-coated frogs, with great staring eyes, whirred dismally all through the evenings in summer. And there was many a silver brook, too, rippling and brawling down through the meadows—now tangling itself like a silken skein in the snarled growth of a clump of brushwood—now creeping slyly along, like a shining snake, in the emerald grass—and now giving a leap and a laugh over a bed of pebbles and stones, and hiding its head far under the turf of the undermined embankment.

If there was a feeling of freshness upon my heart in the springtide, as I roamed about the dear demesne of Dovecote, it changed to one of sweet and unutterable joy as the autumn suns began to throw their yellow beams aslant upon the house, and garden, and fields. There was always a deeper delight in these latter days, to me, than in any other. I felt as if my heart was more full. There was no heat to the sun; but it was so genial. It seemed to open the sluices of the heart, that the old and unquiet feelings might all flow out, and

purser and healthier feelings set in. I loved to linger on the sunny side of some moss-girt wall, and count the yellow peaches still hanging on the limbs; or stroll down across the lawn, trampling the golden leaves that the old elms had showered down at my feet; or loiter about the sunny nooks of the sheds and barns, gazing off dreamily over the haze-environed hills, and watching the patient oxen slowly dragging their loads of yellow corn up through the cartworn lanes.

Autumn seemed to me the harvest time of my heart's richest and ripest feelings. The same sweet associations were sure to hang about me, go where I would: into the spacious garret, through the chambers, whose windows were opened in the middle of the day, and where the slender-waisted wasps swarmed in the sun, or about the gardens and fields. There was some magic—I cannot even now explain it—in the sunshine. It stole in at my eyes, and so to my heart, as I looked at the changing leaves of the huge elms, or the stripped stalks in the garden, or the fading and dying vines on the crest of the garden wall.

The winter never hung heavily, either. It was full of joys all its own. The fires were kindled again on the hearths, and the hearts of the household were drawn in a magnetic circle round them. The sacred home feeling warmed with the dancing flames, fusing all hearts together. There were frost palaces for us on the window panes in the morning, and deep snow drifts for us to fight our way through to school. Frolics of all descriptions were to be had in the barns, from the hay-capped scaffolds to the dark and secret mangers. We had memorable times, too, in the grand old chambers, as we trooped off to bed at night, after listening to fairy stories at the hearth till our mischievous little heads

were fairly turned. And the meetings and greetings at the breakfast table, smoking with its winter comforts, were brief moments of happiness that are notched durably on my jealous memory.

And then, when spring came laughing again over the eastern heights, and the soft south winds drew up through the valley, and the days began perceptibly to lengthen, and the buds to throw off their snug-fitting winter coats again, my heart always danced with the impulse of a new life, and I greeted the new season with a joy I could never fathom.

So it was at Dovecote the year round. Nothing was there in such plenty as happiness. Some would say it was a homely happiness; but it was all the dearer to us for that. There was reality in it all. It was full of truth. There were no strange and meaningless conceits dragged in, to accuse it of poverty or impair its charming wholeness. I am renewed, as my thoughts drift pleasantly back to that old homestead; and my lips involuntarily utter after the poet, in living over again that freshest part of existence, —

“Fresh as a spouting spring upon the hills  
My heart leaped out to life; it little thought  
Of all the vile cares that would rill into it,  
And the low places it would have to go through —  
The drains, the crossings, and the mill work after.”

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE OLD FOLKS AT HOME.

I SEE them now — my grandfather and grandmother — sitting in the hearth corner, as they always used to sit there.

My good grandmother sat next the chimney, in a little high-backed chair, with a cushioned flag bottom, rocking herself gently to and fro, and either dreaming among the fire coals, or looking round among us with moistened eyes and that inimitably sweet smile playing about her mouth.

She wore a tidy little cap, with a snowy ruffle, upon her head; and I could see the silver hair, sometimes, as it lay smoothly parted over her forehead. I thought no one ever wore such dainty caps as my grandmother. They were perfect *bijoux* of caps — though she would not herself have been likely to know what kind of caps *they* were. And over her neck she wore a handkerchief of spotless lawn, or a pretty little cravat, which she had a way of tying, <sup>W</sup> in a jaunty-looking bow, just under her chin.

While she sat in the hearth corner she almost invariably occupied herself with knitting. And at times she grew a little loquacious, too, as all grandmothers have the very best right to be; beginning, often, with some charming story of her girlhood that drew all the young folks about her knee, and leaving off when they might happen to grow weary with the narration.

She helped assort the fall stores of herbs, tying them in proper bunches, and hiding away her own favorites, in whose sanative virtues she had more than ordinary faith, in some place of uncommon security. She gathered marigold and saffron from the beds she had herself sown and planted in the spring; and while she tied them in bunches, or rolled them away carefully in great brown papers, she took the occasion to tell us how much good these innocent herbs would do, if sickness should happen to threaten us in the coming winter.

When the choice apples were got in, she helped pare them with the rest, and then strung them in long necklaces to dry. Nothing, she said, was so good for pies as apples well dried; but they must be *well* dried, she was sure to add to her remark. All the little light duties of housewifery she still prided herself on being able to perform. She was not, however, a body that had a holy horror of what some people call "idleness." It was no sin, her practice seemed to say, for one to sit at times with folded hands gazing into the fanciful realms of the fire, or telling olden stories to the younger part of the household, or lost in the golden memories of ancient days, or listening, with emotions each moment new, to the talk of the mature ones, or the riotous babble of the children.

Beside her chair stood the deep, chair of my grandfather. It was stuffed at its back and sides, and he rolled it about at his pleasure on castors. The top of it reached far above his head, and the three peaks, a trifle after Gothic lines, were surmounted with rude and simple carvings of oak. It was covered with a chintz of a very quaint device, that seemed made, I always thought, for nothing but my grandfather's chair.

He often sat before the fire, with his shrivelled hands over his knees, sometimes looking steadily into the blaze, his head bent a little forward, and sometimes turning about to talk in a low tone to my grandmother. His hair was snowy, showing that the winter of life had really set in with him. The eyes, as they beamed anew in the fluttering excitement of conversation, betrayed only the far-off depths to which their lustre had retreated; as if he would take the sights of the outer world as far back towards his heart as possible, and there enjoy them in silent secrecy.

They were so *good*, those old people, and we all thought them so kind, and indulgent, and free from peevishness. Nay, some of the children went so far as to make a confidant of my grandmother—a thing, I will venture to say, that is rarely attempted by children generally with their grandmothers.

They had their little bed room just beside the keeping room, that they might have no stairs to climb. Their bed always looked so soft and downy, and the spread was always so spotless, and the dimity curtains seemed so tidy, that, whenever I used to get a glimpse of them all, I wished from my heart I could have such a little bed room to myself.

A miniature stand, with three fluted legs, and dog's claws for feet, was placed at the head of the bed, upon whose white cover I always saw the great family Bible; and when my grandfather brought it out and held it on his knees, as he often did, tracing the promises of the life through the round glasses of his silver-bowed spectacles, I could not help wondering if I should ever be as old as he, and be obliged to wear spectacles and read only large letters.

There was a genuine patriarchal simplicity in the

hearts of those two old people that was deeply touching. They were as far removed as may be from the taint of insincerity and worldliness. Their lives had been, since their early marriage, like two limpid brooks, braided together, and gliding now, without a break or a ripple, along the smoothest and stillest of channels. If any new desire possessed one, the other was sure to be possessed likewise. What one felt was felt sympathetically by the other. All they had, and all they were, was in common between them.

So genial and gentle a picture, placed constantly before our eyes, and feeding our young hearts daily with the tenderest and most dutiful of sentiments, might be sure to work upon us for a good end. Their mild looks were alone sufficient to quell a rising rebellion. The faintest smile from the mouth of my grandmother softened my heart before I knew how it had been done. And when she beckoned me, in her own peculiar way, to come and lie my head in her lap, and toyed with my hair with her thin hands, and finally stooped down and kissed my cheek with all her saintly affection, I was sure to feel the tears starting to my eyes, and to find myself weeping at last for very shame.

Their portraits were hung in the parlor, and visitors never failed to look at them with an interest that seemed truly affectionate. I can see the meek look of my grandmother now, as she seemed to be gazing across the wall at my grandfather. He was not at all like her, at least on canvas. The portraits must have been painted in their younger days, for my grandfather's hair was dark, and was brushed up rather stiffly, and in a way, off his forehead. His cravat was white, and was in a notable square bow. A very small piece of his waistcoat, betrayed

far as that went, all the propensities of a gentleman of the "old school."

My grandmother was wont to call my grandfather "Jacob," which was his Christian name; and he never addressed her otherwise than as "mother." What a simple but deep lesson of affection slept in those two words! What histories of joy and grief did they not suggest! What memories—tender and blessed memories—did they not call back to life again!

In the wintry days, my grandfather used to leave his place in the corner by the middle of the forenoon, when the sun began to set the eaves a-running, and make short sallies to the busy portions of the house, or, perhaps, to the outbuildings and barns. He walked with a half-timid step, his attenuated limbs shaking beneath him, and his hands catching at such objects as first came in his way.

He loved chiefly to busy himself in the barn, among the barrels of apples, the rows of pumpkins and winter squashes, and the ricks of corn; or in the granary, reckoning up in his mind the number of bushels the yellow ears would turn out when shelled; or beneath the shed that opened southward, watching the cattle that stood grouped in the faint sun, patiently chewing their cuds and awaiting the sprouting of the new grass on the hill-sides and in the pastures.

He talked with the men servants about the feed, and the net yield of certain fields that he had known from his boyhood, and the coming on of the young cattle, whose sprouted horns told of the sure increase in their value. He occasionally hummed snatches of psalm tunes, stepping about briskly the while, and running his eyes over every nook and angle of the old barn, as if there should be a something there which it was not in his power to find.

If there were rats, or weevil, or other infesting vermin to be got rid of about the granaries, he was the one who took it upon himself to see that it was thoroughly done. All the traps he made and set himself; and he seemed quite as regular in watching them as a boy in tending his partridge snares in the woods. He tinkered by the hour at the work bench in the little carpentry room, making frail trellises for "mother's" choice vines to climb by in the spring, and mending drawers, and bales, and boxes, till it seemed that there could be no more to mend.

In the afternoons, when we came home from school, in winter, the old folks were always sitting beside each other again. Perhaps my grandfather was reading to "mother" from some old pamphlet or book of sermons, while she sat quietly knitting in the corner, her own kind heart knit already a great way into his.

He read often to her in the large Bible; and when he came upon some favorite passage that had been endeared to them both by the familiarity of years, he paused for a moment in his reading, while they both seemed to feed their earnest souls together on the precious consolations it offered them.

And when the table was cleared in the evening, and a new supply of cleft ash or hickory was brought in and laid across the firelogs, and the flames began to crackle and to glow, spouting out their pale and slender columns towards us all, there sat the old folks in the same corner still. My mother—bless her tenderest of hearts!—sat in the corner opposite my grandmother, and my father managed somehow to lose himself in the nest of the younger folk.

The fire burned sometimes with unusual brilliancy, lighting up the whole of our circle. At such times I

used to gaze in mute wonder at the shining forehead of my grandfather, and at his snowy locks and dimming eyes; and I asked myself if the good old man must not be perfectly wretched in knowing that he could live so few years longer, at the most. It seemed strange to me, then, to see those white-headed people thus sitting at their ease in the corner, ready, I thought, for the harvest, and waiting, perhaps, to be gathered in.

I have no room for such childish wonders now.

As if they were not ready and willing to depart, saying, with the patriarch of old, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace"! As if that silver that lay on the locks were not the blossoming that promised a ripe and ready harvest in heaven!

Always, before we went off to bed,—to lie and listen to the howling winds all night blowing over fields of frozen snows, and perchance to dream of the soaking and softening spring rains that would cause the buried seeds to burst again into beauty from the warm mould,—we received the old folks' blessed "Good night," and felt ourselves all the better that we had deserved it.

We left them in the corner at night. We welcomed them there in the morning. They belonged to that hearth. They were a part of the whole life of my heart. It had not then been complete if the chair of either had been standing vacant there.

They grew deeply into my heart, till they became a part of it themselves.

## CHAPTER VII.

### FEARFUL CHANGES.

MR. TREVELYN came into the parlor of his mansion at Byeboro', one day, evidently in great excitement. Yet he made a strong effort to control himself, as many men in like circumstances are outwardly apt to do. It was a calmness, however, that was too forced to be without peculiar meaning.

He had just arrived home from the post office in the village, where a letter had been put into his hands that was the cause of all this sudden reversion of feeling.

Entering the parlor, he found his wife there with the elder daughter, Margaret. Mrs. Trevelyn did not look up to exchange glances of recognition with him, but went on with the piece of muslin on which she was at work. He accosted her first.

"Wife," said he, "you must change all your plans and purposes. I have just received news of an overwhelming nature. It has just reached me by the mail. You had better prepare your mind for the worst at once."

"Why, what is the matter?" exclaimed Mrs. Trevelyn, dropping her work in her lap, and gazing now with deep astonishment into the face of her husband.

She saw the state of his feelings, then, at a glance.

"What *has* happened, Mr. Trevelyn?" she repeated.

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He tried to be calm, but it cost him plainly a terrible effort.

"This letter," said he, producing the same one he had received, "bears the whole intelligence. It tells me that I am a ruined man."

"Mr. Trevelyn!" shrieked the wife, holding up both her hands. "What do you mean, my husband? What *can* you mean? *Who* has ruined you? *What* has ruined you?"

"Try to compose yourself; it is a trying matter, but we need not make it worse than it is. I told you that I am ruined. I am; and every thing goes by the board with me. Mr. Mansfield—one of the house in whose hands I have left the whole of my property—writes me that they are themselves sunk, and must carry me and all I have with them.

"My husband! my husband!" shrieked the wife, wringing her hands and expressing every variety of agonizing look upon her countenance, "*are* you ruined? *Must* we be poor? *Must* we come to want? O, tell me if what you say is true! Tell me if my poor children must become beggars! I cannot bear it; no, it will break my heart to hear that it must be so! *Tell* me, Mr. Trevelyn, if we must come to want?"

"We are not possessed of a dollar in the world. All has gone—every cent. I am a poor man—as poor as I ever was in my life. Worse—*worse*! I am in debt beyond all that I was ever worth!"

"O my husband! Did I ever—did I *ever* expect to live to see this? O mercy! *mercy*!"

"Mother, *dear* mother," interposed her daughter Margaret, who had sat an unwilling spectator to this scene of distress, "I beg you won't feel so bad just for papa's

being *poor*! What if we *are* poor? We may be happy, mayn't we, mother?"

The father shook his head. The trial was, in reality, harder for him than for his wife to bear. He kept his feelings back; and thus, dammed up about his heart, they became turbulent and fearfully troublesome.

"But you do not yet know what it *is* to be poor, Margaret," returned her mother, though without looking at her particularly. "It is to be without friends; to be unnoticed as long as you live; to be laughed at, and sneered at, and talked familiarly about by all the coarse, vulgar creatures that live. We don't know yet what we are to suffer. And all this to come so sudden upon me! O, I shall die! I shall die! My heart will break if this is true. I cannot live to see my poor children want."

"I feel this change as deeply as you can," said her husband. "Something has troubled me for a long time past. It must have been a secret fear of this very thing. I *wonder* if I can get through it."

A new light danced across his wife's brain.

"O Mr. Trevelyn," said she, seizing his arm and looking with her passionate eyes close into his, "do try to keep off this blow! Do go to town at once, and see if there's nothing that can be done—not even one single thing—to keep back this danger! There may be hope yet. It may not be too late, Mr. Trevelyn; why *won't* you see what chance there is left for us? Don't let us fall so low, as we must if this intelligence you have got is true?"

"There is no mistaking that," said he, emphatically.

"No hope, did you say? no *chance* open for us yet? no room for us to save our poor, dear children?"

"I see none. We are ruined. We are poor as we ever were."

"Mercy! *mercy*!" again cried the woman; and again she wrung her hands, and again threw her eyes up to the ceiling.

"You should try to be more collected," he said to her. "It is not the part of a true woman, and a mother, to take on in this way for the loss of property. It's what I've always said, and said to one person as well as another: you can't tell to-day that you will be rich to-morrow. Riches have wings. The Bible tells us that; and I *believe* it now, if I never was able to before."

"But there may be some means for you to save a *part* of your money!" suggested his wife, at the height of hysterical symptoms. "Only a *part* of it, Mr. Trevelyn! *That* would be better than to be *wholly* without—to be *poor*! O, how *can* I bear to think of such a thing? How *can* I bear to think of such a dreadful change for us all?"

"I'll help you, mother, when we have to work," heroically offered Margaret.

"God bless you, my child! It's all the help *I* can give that you will want yourself! *You* can do nothing. You are entirely helpless. All that I must live now to see will be my children wanting for bread and clothes. And how these shallow upstarts will all look down on us then, and tell us that they knew all the time we must come down; and say they're glad of it, and it was good enough for us, and all that! Mr. Trevelyn, *will* you not go at once to town, and see if there is no way of escape? See if you can't sacrifice some one else in your place! There *is* hope—I know there is. I shan't be at rest till I know better than I do now that all our property is gone."

"It's a dreadful reality, I know," said Mr. T., pacing the floor excitedly; "it will have to be understood a little at a time. You cannot take the whole of such a truth in at once!" And forthwith he fell to muttering over something that his wife could not understand.

"Ruin! ruin!" said he at last, in a low tone; and he stopped short in the middle of the floor, and looked down upon the carpet with a riveted gaze. "I can *say* it, I can *spell* it, I can make *others* understand it; but I cannot understand it *myself*! It's a simple word, a very simple word; but it's a dreadful *fact*. How shall I get round it?"

And straightway he fell to walking briskly across the floor again.

"There *is* a way, Mr. Trevelyn! There *must* be a way! And you must go at once and find it out. I will go with you, if you wish. I will do any thing. If there's any figuring to be done—if letters are to be written—if old accounts are to be looked into—O, let *me* do it! I will save you, if I can. There may be some mistake in adding up figures somewhere. The firm may have made a gross miscalculation somewhere. Let *me* find it out for you. I *know* I can do it. Let me go with you, and be satisfied."

"There must be *fraud*!" muttered Mr. Trevelyn, again pausing and studying the figure of the carpet. "Fraud has been practised before; why not here? I confess I have been much too confiding with these men. I always had the highest trust in them. Perhaps it has been abused at last, and I am made the victim."

The thought, sudden as it was, fixed him with a new purpose. He stamped his foot heavily upon the floor, and threw his eyes with a wild look about the room, as

if he were trying properly to collect his shattered and wrecked reflections.

"*Fraud*, Mr. Trevelyn, did you say?" asked his wife, who had caught the word.

He made no reply, but walked with hasty strides out of the room.

Mrs. Trevelyn, thereupon, gave way to a violent fit of weeping. She bent her head far down in her lap, burying her face in the muslin kerchief at which she was at work when her husband came in. Margaret, who, in proportion as her mother lost her courage, seemed to increase her own, attempted to offer her syllables of her childish condolence; but it must have been that they only added to the fuel that already produced the flame.

All night long did Mr. Trevelyn sit up, ransacking and poring over piles of musty papers, and jotting down innumerable figures on innumerable slips of paper,—now holding his pen nervously in his mouth, and now sticking it hurriedly behind his ear,—and adding, subtracting, and multiplying, until it seemed as if every figure must certainly have been worked in somewhere; muttering to himself, pacing the room, and alternately rousing himself to the highest pitch of fear, or composing his feelings to the lowest limit within his reach. When the morning dawned, it still found him at his secretary. His hair was much tumbled and his lips parched. His eyes looked haggard and bloodshot, and in no respect was Mr. Trevelyn the man he usually was.

His wife again ventured to open the door of the room. He had done little else, he thought, but send her away through the night. She entered to urge him to taste some coffee she had prepared for him with her

own hands. He took it from her, but his lip quivered. Possibly he thought of the changed condition that was just upon them, and of the few acts of kindness she would hereafter feel disposed to render him in her distress.

At first sipping it, and then drinking all off at a draught, he stood on his feet. There was a peculiarity in his manner, in his eye, in his whole look, that betrayed more than mere nervousness. Yet his wife might have observed none of it.

His travelling trunk was got ready, and he prepared himself—though not with his usual care—to return to town by the early stage. In an hour it was before the gate. He had bidden his wife a half-sullen “Good by;” his trunk was strapped on behind the coach; he had taken his seat; and away he went down the road, to the clatter of the horses’ hoofs, speedily towards the metropolis.

It was quite late in the afternoon when he arrived there. Without taking refreshment, he hurried to his hotel, and thence to the counting room of the house with whose fortunes he had fallen.

No one was about the building but Mr. Mansfield. Business was through, for they had stopped. Mr. Mansfield was sitting on a high stool, with his back resting against a desk, engaged in whittling and thinking. As he caught sight of Mr. Trevelyn entering the door, an appearance of embarrassment seemed for a moment to flush in his face, and he started unconsciously.

Mr. Trevelyn saluted him, looking him straight in the eye. He was cool in his civilities, and asked Mr. T. to be seated. There was no need of travelling about the matter at all; they both understood it thoroughly.

And they went straight to the mark with their first words.

After the exchange of a few general remarks, Mr. Trevelyn signified that he should be in his room at his hotel all through the evening, and invited him to bring his books along with him; and with a promise from the merchant to be there seasonably, he left him and walked out into the street.

How different his thoughts from those heretofore when he had walked those same streets! What a loss of energy could he feel now, throughout his whole mental and physical constitution! How depressed were his spirits, as he had never thought to live to feel!

Later somewhat than he had engaged, Mr. Mansfield went to his room. He entered, and Mr. Trevelyn rose to seat him near the table, locking the door at the same time. The merchant’s quick ear caught the snapping sound of the lock, and his face became livid with fear, though fear of what it would have been difficult for him to say.

It was quite an hour that they continued thus closeted. No loud voices were heard in the vicinity of the door, and nothing like symptoms of anger or passion were discoverable. That quarter of the building was as free from disturbance, or so much as the breath of disturbance, as any other.

All at once a loud and ringing report fell upon the ear, reverberating along the alleys and passages, and bringing every one to his or her door in great consternation. What could it mean? where was it? was the universal cry. Assistance was summoned from the officers of the hotel, who came in confusion from below, knocking at every door that was locked to find the locality where the alarm originated. Waiters and ser-

vants were at their heels, and boarders crowded on close after them.

They finally reached the door of Mr. Trevelyn's room, and knocked there. No answer. There was a strong and stifling smell of powder. They knocked again. No answer yet. They listened. A low moan was just audible from within. Putting their shoulders stoutly against the door, they forced it, and went tumbling into the room. Every one who saw that ghastly sight fell backward with horror. There lay two men, one of them stone dead, the other just gasping in the last agonies of his life. He still clutched a pistol tightly in his hand, and gnashed his teeth fearfully, rolling up his eyes to the wall.

One of the men, the dead man, was Mr. Mansfield; the other was Mr. Trevelyn. He had taken this method of settling with one by whom he was thoroughly convinced he had been robbed and ruined.

It would be needless to try to picture, except in imagination, the grief that broke its huge and darkened cloud over the bereft family of the murderer and suicide. It cannot be conveyed, though one held a pen that ran swifter than the blood that pulses from his quick-beating heart.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE POORHOUSE.

THERE are worse holes made in families than those made by digging up the treasure. There are sorer trials than those that breed from mere poverty, or even from absolute want.

When he who has hitherto stood the brunt of the conflict with the world, who has always interposed between his little group and the rough realities of outer life the shield of his protection, who has watched the changing of every wind for them, and the coming of every storm, — when this one is struck down, and the family front is utterly gone, nothing between helplessness and heartlessness to keep back the latter from its cruel inroads, *then* it is that the soul of the bereft mate, yearning for her unprotected younglings, may take up its bitterest lamentations, and cry aloud in the greatness of its grief.

Mrs. Trevelyn was a widow, and made a widow by what terrible means! She sat and gazed at the children, and wondered where the strength was to come from that should bear them safely through the world on its shoulders. Her heart misgave her utterly. She neither had courage herself, nor seemed to know where to go for strength. She would sit and pat the heads of the children by the half hour, talking sometimes to herself and sometimes to them about their new circum-

stances, and add exclamation to exclamation about their yet hidden future.

All this was radically bad, not less for Mrs. Trevelyn herself than for her children. The naturally healthy purposes that were ready to develop themselves in Margaret became thus weakened with her example, till they were altogether unnoticeable. What Margaret felt, of course her younger sister would sympathetically feel; and both were now little better than helpless, and much of this through the vacillation and weakness of their mother. Other mothers it would not have been difficult to find, who bore quite as much love for their children as she, and a plenty of them, who, in such a struggle as was then at hand, would have made them into little heroines, if only by the secret power of their own example.

But Mrs. Trevelyn knew not *what* to do. She had formed no plan, because her mind was incapable of the necessary effort. She was governed by a blind resolution to trust to chance, let it turn with her whichever way it would. Her nature was altogether passive. It had scarce activity and demonstrativeness enough in it to keep her life in a healthy condition.

On a single point, however, her mind was quite settled. If she failed on all others, she certainly meant not to fail here. Her old prejudice had succeeded in working its active way even through the depth of her grief. She was determined to give Milly into other hands, and at once. The child was a beggar, she said; and what were *they* but beggars? She could not undertake to support her, or even to care for her. Of that, she had quite enough in prospect, in having only her own children at her side. She would put her off immediately.

The appearance of things about the mansion of the late Mr. Trevelyn was changing fast. Already had all the servants taken their leave but a single one, and she was of a character much above the lot into which she had fallen. As long as she could be of service to a woman in such deep affliction as Mrs. Trevelyn, she declared that she would stand faithfully by her. Might not that lady herself have taken a bit of a lesson from so excellent an example, and offered to the orphan Milly what was so generously bestowed upon herself?

The house was desolate, and it seemed really deserted. There was no noise either of feet or voices about the halls, or in the chambers, or out on the spacious veranda. The yard was no exception to the rest of the picture. The plants stood as they were last left, needing the thrifty attention of the absent gardener. Grass rooted itself along the gravel walks, and weeds grew thickly over the beds, among the choice flowers.

A cloud had settled over all the place, outside no less than within. What the heart of the widow realized, the appearance of the building and the grounds made almost as palpable a reality to the minds of passers. The country people round about were at best but an honest, homespun class, scarce ever straying twenty miles from their farms, and always schooled to regard the mansion of Mr. Trevelyn with a wonder that bordered somewhere near awe. To all of them this unforeseen change gave a heavy blow, for it threw their minds off the accustomed way of thinking. Some of them had deeper natures, and could be moved to downright sympathy for the widow. Others thought it was a wonderful affair; and others still shook their heads, and said that the hand of Providence was in it all.

Mrs. Trevelyn talked to her daughters about Milly with as much freedom as she would have done to mature persons.

"We are to get our own living, I suppose," said she, "and I'm sure that will be quite enough for us. She can't expect us to provide for her any longer; and if she does, I don't know that we shall feel obligated to. She's no relation of mine, nor of yours; and if she wants to find her relations now, she must go elsewhere."

"Where do you think she will go, mother?" questioned Margaret. "Back to the city again?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. It's nothing to *me* where she goes, if I do but get her off my hands. She shouldn't have come here in the first place."

"But that woman brought her, you know."

"Yes, and I wish now that woman would come and take her away again. If I knew where she lived, I'd send her to her."

"She's so small she can't help us any," said Margaret.

"And such a temper, too," added Ellen, spitefully.

"I don't want any thing more to do with her," repeated Mrs. Trevelyn. "She came here without my pleasure being asked, and she shall go away in the same manner."

"But, mother, where will you send her? She hasn't any *friends*."

"Hasn't any friends? As many as *we* have got, I guess; and what is it to me if she hasn't? It's nothing that *I* can help. She must find friends; must *make* them."

"I never liked her," said Ellen, lisping.

"Why *should* you, my dear?" asked her mother.

"What is she to *you*? I hope my daughters will never

think of associating with people that come of such low families."

Just at that moment the servant opened the door and ushered in an honest-looking man, ruddy faced and rough handed, who had asked to see Mrs. Trevelyn herself on private business. She stared very rudely, for one who was so certain she was a lady, at him, and neglected, even, to ask him to be seated. This sort of civility, however, happened to be something he did not much trouble himself about; so he put his hat upon the floor, and sat down in an arm chair near the window.

"I've come to see you, Miss Trevelyn," began he, "about the taxes. They haven't been paid, you know."

"Taxes!" exclaimed Mrs. T. "I'm sure *I* don't know any thing about them! Why should I? What am *I* expected to know of them?"

"Wal, you see," pursued the man, "that I'm one of the town authority, and it's a part of my duty to look after these things. When your husband was living, of course you warn't *expected* to know what these things are for. But it's different now, you see. I've come over to see you, and to ask you what you thought you could do."

"Do? I can do nothing! *I* haven't money to pay any thing with, much less my taxes. You must get them somewhere else. You must take them out of the house, or the garden, or somewhere else; *I* don't know any thing about them."

"It's only the taxes that are behindhand, Miss Trevelyn. Of course, I don't expect you to pay tax on property that ain't yours. This place ain't *yours*, you know."

She felt *then* that she knew it, with the coarse words

of that every-day man of business rasping her tender domestic feelings, as thoroughly as she ever should. But she offered no reply. A glance at the intruder, and a gaze about the room, were enough to fill her heart with the bitterest of reflections.

"Wal, then, it's no matter, jest now," said he, thinking to leave, and taking up his hat from the floor; "I see you don't understand these things. I'll call some other time and explain 'em. We'll set down and talk 'em all over, Miss Trevelyn. Don't give yourself no further uneasiness about it till then. I hain't no doubt it'll all come out smooth as a whistle!—yes, jest as smooth as a whistle!"

As he was in the complacent act of repeating the latter portion of this sentence, he swung his beaver leisurely from one side to the other by the edge of the brim, and run his eyes curiously all over the room, taking into his comprehensive view every thing there was, from the paper border near the ceiling to the clawfoot of the pan that caught the drippings and clinker of the grate.

A new thought suddenly came to Mrs. Trevelyn.

"You are one of the town authority, you say?" she inquired, with a little show of respectfulness.

"Yes, marm," he answered, "I'm the fust selectman."

And he swung his hat more briskly on the tip of his finger.

"Then you can oblige me, if you will."

"I should be glad to, I'm sure, in the situation you're in now," returned he.

"I have a little girl living here whom I wish to send away. She must go somewhere, and immediately for I can't take care of her any longer. She has no friends,

and no relations, that I ever heard of, and there's nothing left for her but to go on the town."

The "fust selectman" of Byeboro' merely replied with a more vigorous swing of his hat and a low "Hum! yes!"

"I thought that the sooner I got her off, the better," added Mrs. Trevelyn.

"Yes," said the member of the town council.

"Why cannot she be taken away at once, then?"

"To-day, marm, if you like," said he.

"Margaret," said Mrs. T., "won't you call her in, then? She's somewhere out the door. Tell her I want to see her."

Margaret ran to do the errand of her mother, and immediately returned again. It was not over a minute or two afterwards that Milly herself entered the room. As soon as she saw what a collection there was in the parlor, she instinctively slunk back towards the door, and would have thought seriously, even, of retreating.

Mrs. Trevelyn, however, spoke to her, which tended in some degree to reassure her.

"I want you to go and put on your bonnet and shawl," said she; "you are going away with this man."

Milly's eyes were larger than they ever were before. She looked first at the stranger, and then at Mrs. Trevelyn. It was difficult for her to understand what was meant.

Mrs. Trevelyn whispered in the ear of Margaret to go and bid the servant pack up Milly's clothes—what the child had—in a little shawl or handkerchief, and place them on the table in the entry.

The tears came involuntarily into the child's eyes. Her lips quivered, as if she were both struggling with her feelings and her wish to inquire the meaning of this

new project. Yet she said nothing. What would have been the avail of her infantile voice in the storm of such elements as its very sound might have had the power to provoke?

She kept her hands working nervously at either side, not knowing what to do with them. After the first glance about the room, her eyes were riveted to the floor, as if she were even then trying to study out the problem of her destiny. A pretty creature was she then, in the height of her inward excitement, with her face so fair, flushed very deeply, and her auburn hair straggling in ringlets over her shoulders and neck, resting the whole of her little weight now on one foot, and now the other, her eyes dimmed with the dew of her emotion, and her mouth working to keep back the convulsions that seemed threatening her heart.

"I want you to know, Milly," said Mrs. Trevelyn, "that we shall all have to go away from here soon, and so I send you away first. I shall have to go, too, and so will Margaret and Ellen. We cannot stay here, for we do not own the place. It is not ours."

The stranger's eyes sparkled while he continued looking so steadily at Milly; and it might have been that he was at that moment thinking what a kind woman Mrs. Trevelyn was.

"I am going to send you away with this man," added she; "he will take you to the place that is provided for such as you."

Milly cried outright now.

"What are you crying for?" asked Mrs. Trevelyn. "This is no time to cry. Come, on with your bonnet; the man's waiting."

"No very *partic'ler* hurry, marm," ventured he.

"All the same, sir," she retorted. "It is as well for

her to go off without any delay. She'll feel better than if a great deal was said about it beforehand to her."

"It kinder seems a *pity*, too," said the stranger, "to take the child out of sich a good, fine house as this, and carry her to the *poorhouse*!"

"But what else have I before myself for my own children? If I can work enough to support them, then it's so much the more I've got to be thankful for; but when I happen to be obliged to *stop* working, then what is my prospect but what hers is at this minute?"

The possibility of such an event as her coming upon the town at last so far went to excite the selfish feelings and fears of Mrs. Trevelyn, that she was more than ever encouraged in thinking that she was doing the very best she could at that time do for Milly.

It was not long before the little waif of fate was equipped for the journey, and the man held her diminutive budget of clothes in his hand. He had started first towards the door, Mrs. Trevelyn following. The girls were at some distance behind her, moved not a little by so unusual a scene.

"I hope you'll do well," said Mrs. Trevelyn, "wherever you go."

"Please, may I go up to my little chamber before I get into the wagon?" asked Milly.

Mrs. T. looked surprisedly at her, and said, "Yes, but don't be gone long." And when she was gone, she muttered aloud, "I wonder what she's gone up there for!"

A strange curiosity led her to follow her cautiously along. When Mrs. Trevelyn reached the door of her room, she found it shut. She put her eyes down to the keyhole. There a sight met her for which she was not at all prepared.

Milly was on her knees at the bedside, asking for strength and resignation. She had not forgotten her mother's dying words, enjoining her to trust all to God.

Poor child! How few are as honestly tutored as thou! How few are there who know where to go when trouble sets about their path, or when the black cloud of affliction is sailing sullenly about their heads!

Milly came down stairs with a countenance as serene as day. The tears were all gone; the working of her lips had ceased; there was a smile of resignation upon her mouth, though somewhat tinged with sadness.

She bade them all good by very affectionately, offering of herself to kiss Mrs. Trevelyn and the girls, and telling them she should try to be happy wherever she was. And stepping lightly down the walk, she suffered herself to be assisted into the wagon of the "selectman," and rode at a jogging trot of his horse down the avenue and up the road.

It was a ride of a mile to the village, and of nearly three miles from there to the poorhouse. They passed through the former, and were slowly working onward to their destination. The air was bland and pleasant, and the evening shadows were gathering about the old stone walls, and under the hedges, and in the borders of the woods. The breath of the country breezes, soft as it was, had a good effect upon the feelings of Milly, for it quelled their turbulence, and gently soothed them to peace.

When they reached the poorhouse at last, it was quite dusk. Milly looked closely around her to try to distinguish objects, but the most she could make out, that then impressed themselves upon her mind and feelings, were the long, low, red house, with the windows and doors bordered with white paint; an open

space before and about the door, pretty thickly strewn with chips and gravel; a ragged pile of long wood, most of it called "crow sticks," and chopped stick by stick as daily necessities required; and a low bench, that leaned up against the side of the building.

The man drove up before the farther door, and another, low in stature and with tangled hair, came to greet him, resting his hands on either side of the door where it was painted white.

"I've brought ye another boarder, Mr. Flox," said Milly's companion.

"She's a little 'un, ain't she?" replied the keeper of the establishment, taking her much against her will, and lifting her to the ground.

The men stood talking together for a few moments in a low voice, when the "selectman" finally turned round his horse's head, and Mr. Flox led Milly passively in through the low door.

## CHAPTER IX.

ADAM DROWNE.

MILLY was carried into a low and darkened room, whose walls seemed to be threatening all the time to fall on her head, and conducted to a seat upon the bench that stood against the partition. There was no light burning, and she could only see that the room appeared to be full. She caught broken fragments of coarse sentences, and the remnants of boisterous and empty laughter, as she went in, proceeding from the lips of men and women alike.

This room was professedly "the woman's room," yet the whole house was accustomed to gather here, the better to exchange their ideas respecting the past, the world, and their future of nothing but poverty. A sorry-looking group, indeed, did they form; women lolling in low chairs, talking up with amazing pertness to the rough fellows that were practising their only rules of refinement and sociability upon them; men, old and young, sitting about without thought here and there, some resting their heads idly on their hands, and their elbows on the benches, or holding their heads doggedly down between their knees in the direction of the floor; a girl playing in this corner with a cat, and another sitting squat in the middle of the hard floor, eating the fragments of her coarse meal; two or three boys, one a little cripple, grouped in still another corner, playing at cat's-cradle, and laughing thoughtlessly at their blunders

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ADAM DROWNE.

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in the simple diversion; and a little dog, with a curly tail, and black and white spots covering him, standing sentry near the girl who sat on the floor, watching with a wistful anxiety every morsel that went from her hand to her mouth.

In the midst of this was the soft, enticing, dreamy breath of summer. The air drew in at the door, and through the opened windows, trying hard to give purification to the crowded den into which it found its way. The piping of the summer frogs was to be faintly heard from afar, and a whippoorwill had come down out of the woods, and was sitting on a stone not far across the meadow, loading the air with her melancholy complaint.

Byeboro'—and Byeboro' is not a single example of what a civilized town does for its poor—had made these provisions for those who were unable to make them for themselves. The civil authorities were a very shrewd set of men, and were, at least, supposed to know "a thing or two." So they put up their paupers at auction, and knocked them off to the lowest bidder. It was only a method the town adopted of making the best of a bad bargain. Of course, Byeboro' was not compelled to provide for its poor; and certainly it was not compelled to make any better provisions than would just keep soul and body acquainted. If it were to enter upon a field of charity, who knew how far it ought to travel that way better than its august assemblage of "selectmen"? Why *were* they "select" men, unless to look sharply after the interests of Byeboro'? unless to see to it that luxuries were not by any possible mistake furnished to the poor? and that as many comforts as *cost* any thing were struck off with an impartial stroke of the pen from the list of the incorporate expenses?

This year again, as for several years before, the paupers had been let out to Caleb Flox, a hard man, with a burly, bully look, and a heart almost, if not altogether, destitute of sensibility. What, in the name of sense, could *sensibility* have to do with the care of the *poor*? Nothing; of course, nothing. So Mr. Flox took the poor, penned them up, fed them so many times a day, and played the part of the experienced tyrant that he really was.

The impression Milly had received from her first introduction to this place of its many peculiarities — strange enough to one just from the princely residence of the Trevelyns — was too deep ever to be effaced. The men and the women were present vividly before her imagination. She had the same close, foul atmosphere ever in her nostrils, as she recurred afterwards to this first visit, and the same confused din of voices constantly in her ears.

She began the next day to look a little around her. In such a condition of embarrassment herself, she would naturally find it difficult exactly to possess the whole of her faculties; yet she made the effort, almost indifferent to the experience to which it might be the means of conducting her.

Almost the first person among the whole of that snarl of inmates to whom her attention was directed was a thin, wasted man, of middle age, clad in little else than rags, that he preferred to any other quality of garments, with a white head of straight hair, and blue, melancholy-looking eyes. He fixed his mild gaze much upon Milly, as if he were either wondering at the strange fortune that threw her into that place, or quietly admiring the innocent and childish charms that surrounded her with a grace that was little less than spiritual.

In the course of the morning, when she had been left quite alone in the apartment, its usual loungers having gone in different directions to their work and their pleasure, he came in and sat down with her. At first he indulged himself with such a protracted gaze at her face that she began to fear for what he might be. There was an expression in his blue eyes that seemed unfathomable. They almost looked into one's heart and read its secret feelings. She turned her head away and let her eyes go out through the window.

Nervously throwing one foot across the other knee, he asked her, first clearing his voice, if she had ever lived in a poorhouse before.

She turned round, half timidly, to him, and answered, "No, sir."

"Poor place! Poor place enough!" said he, shaking his head.

She thought it very probable, judging from what she had already seen.

"You shouldn't stay here," said he again. "It ain't no place for you. It's only a place for such people as you see hereabout, not for *you*. I don't live here myself; I *couldn't*!"

Milly wondered, therefore, where he *did* stay; and if in other quarters, why here at all, especially with the very just opinion he entertained of it.

"I'm nothing but a wanderer myself," continued he. "I go any where and every where. He! he! I *travel* for a living! That's all I do. What's easier? Exactly what I *say* — what's easier? If I had to live *here*, I should die. I couldn't stand it. Are *you* goin' to stay long?"

Milly hesitated, for she did not know exactly how to answer him. If she could get away into a better place,

—and that was every thing but an extravagant possibility, — she certainly should not stay here. That was not difficult to answer to. But could she get away?

So she simply told him that she didn't know.

Her tone struck so softly on his ear that it seemed to touch a chord of his deeper sympathies. He at once opened himself freely to her, laboring chiefly to win her confidence.

"You needn't be *afraid* o' me at all," said he. "I'm nobody to *hurt* you. I couldn't hurt *any body*. I'm only Adam Drowne. I only go about here and there, but I never tell any body where. He! he! that's one, o' my *secrets*. I keep it locked up close. Mr. Flox tries to get it away from me sometimes; but he *can't*, and he never will. Every body knows Adam Drowne, because he goes every where, all about. He sees a good many places, and knows a good many people, and travels a good many miles; yes, *that's* what he does!"

"La! I know all the folks that live here, and all about here. I always stop here when I come this way, and they get me somethin' to eat and drink, and keep me o' nights. I can tell you all about the poor folks in this house. Come, go walk with me out door a little ways, and let's have a talk! Come; *will* ye? only down towards the river here. It's a right pleasant mornin', and I know it's better for you than to stay mewed up in this here hot place."

By dint of much persuasion, Milly was at length induced to comply with his proposal; and forthwith she set out, walking silently along by his side, with her bonnet loosely thrown over her head.

They reached the edge of the bank by which the little glassy river swam along, and sat down; Adam throwing himself upon the ground, and seating Milly

thoughtfully upon a clean, smooth stone. The lively trill of the bobolink was to be heard across the meadow, as, wheeling and gyrating in his intoxicated flights, he poised a moment on the top of a long reed, swinging and swaying to and fro to the music of his voice and the dancing of his little heart. The crickets were letting their clocks run slowly down in the deep, green grass; while afar down the channel the river broke in a thousand diminutive cascades over rocks and stones, and rippled and brawled its pleasant way entirely out of sight among the darkening willows and beeches.

"You see," continued Adam Drowne, picking up the thread of his story again; "you see, I know all about these folks here, from Caleb Flox all the way down; and a very curious people be they, too. There's Crazy Jane; she's *always* puttin' herself forward; she don't get no attention from nobody; she's *crazy*, and that's all you can say about her. Have you seen her yet?"

Milly told him that she had.

"How she *stares* at a body!" said Adam; "and what great gray eyes she's got!"

So Milly thought, too.

"Then there's old Ponce — the old fellow with the wooden leg; you've seen *him*, hain't you?"

"Yes," answered she.

"He's always tellin' his *war* stories, and always fightin' his old battles over again. And I like to hear him, too, sometimes; but, then, the rest of 'em don't. They get tired of it. They don't *understand* him. You see, there's nothin' like *understandin'* what a person's talkin' about. Don't *you* think so?"

Milly said yes, of course.

"Then, again," he went on, "there's little Kit; he's

the little cripple that goes on the crutches, and a pitiful object he always was to me, too. I'm as sorry for him as I ever was for any body in all my life. He's got something in his face that tells that he ought to ha' been put into a different situation. I *pity* him, indeed I do. And there's Snarly Moll — *she's* a real curiosity. Have you seen her?"

"I didn't know that that was her name," answered Milly.

"It's what they all call her," continued Adam. "She got the name by always wearin' her red hair so over her face and eyes. It's an odd name too — Snarly Moll!" And the garrulous old man fairly chuckled with the thought of so unique an appellation.

Adam Drowne was a strange medley of characteristics himself. He was generally reputed to be "love-cracked," some unfortunate termination to an old attachment being the cause of the mysterious mischief. As he had himself represented, he was no less than a wanderer, going here and there at his will. Probably he had mapped out in his mind some particular route for his journeys to and fro, and had his regular stopping-places absolutely fixed and defined; but of this he had never spoken to any one, so his ceaseless rambles were matter of mystery to every body who knew of them.

He was shrivelled and thin. His hands and limbs were very much attenuated, probably from excessive walking and little food. The coat that he wore was all in shreds, patched and darned until the original field of cloth was hardly discoverable. People circulated the story that he had purchased this for his wedding coat, and that he had worn no other since the catastrophe that sent him and his affections adrift. Summer and winter the same darned coat covered his shoulders. In

the coldest of weathers, he suffered no other garment to conceal its picturesque tatters.

There was a pleasant mildness in his speech that wrought with a favorable effect on the mind of Milly. It was so different from the manner every one else seemed to have there. And the softness of his wandering blue eye helped to carry forward the agreeable influences, so that, before the child had been a great while in his company, she felt herself irresistibly attracted to him by his kindness. It was something she had not experienced in a long while, and so doubly welcome to her heart.

For quite a couple of hours did Adam stroll about in the vicinity of the poorhouse with Milly, telling her more particularly of those who were gathered in the same unhappy flock with herself, asking her questions of her former relations and friends, and telling her that she should not stay long in such a place as that, if *he* could do any thing to prevent it.

Mrs. Trevelyn sending Milly to the poorhouse, and a poor, simple, but kindhearted creature like Adam Drowne offering to get her out! Such is one of the many strong contrasts that the world furnishes at every point.

## CHAPTER X.

## LIFE AMONG THE PAUPERS.

ADAM suddenly absented himself, and Milly felt more lonely than ever. While he was there, she began to think there was one single green spot on which her hungry sympathies might feed; but now that he was gone, chaos seemed to have come again to her heart.

A dismal, uncomfortable house indeed was the poor-house, and its two chief rooms were thronging with the most forbidding fancies. The ceiling was low, and the walls were stained and spotted. The plaster had been worn off in places under the windows by the attrition of cowhide boots and knees harder than flint or horn. The stove that went a part of the way towards warming it in winter still stood in the middle of the floor, and into its gaping mouth were thrown bits of tobacco, stained pipe stems that had broken between the smokers' crunching teeth, whittlings of pine sticks, a few fragments of old teacups, and scraps of used-up newspapers. A few boughs of evergreen would have bred a spirit of beauty even in that foul apartment; but the boughs of evergreen had never been stuck there, and never would be.

The floor was not a whit too clean, and marked and scarred all over with chair legs and boot heels. Some of the chairs were tilted up against the wall, standing thus idly through the long forenoons, till their old occupants came to claim them again. There was a mouldy

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smell from the walls, and in some places they exuded a foul sweat sufficient to breed a legion of diseases. Each one appeared to occupy a particular place about the room, and the rest quietly respected his or her chair.

Sometimes Caleb Flox was obliged to resort to stringent measures to enforce his authority, although such measures he never failed to threaten them every one with when he spoke to them of his wishes; but there had been occasions when his cruelty was exercised to a degree beyond what even such uncivilized beings as the "selectmen" of Byeboro' should have tolerated. As an example at hand, he was guilty of turning hot water from the teakettle upon the arms of one of his charge, a woman, because she refused to go through the Monday's washing service. He touched up the sensibilities of some of the men at times with a heated poker, in order to quicken their progress to and from the wood pile before the door. Few soft words, either, had he to waste on any of them. He said he wanted to govern, he cared not whether by fair means or foul; and govern he did, and by the foulest method humanity was known any where to tolerate.

Under so tyrannical a master, the subjects were burning up with their private animosities and desires of revenge. They all longed for the day to dawn when they could dabble with the hot blood of his heart! No less than this were the prejudices that fired their feelings. No result short of this would they fix their purposes upon.

Mr. Flox had said but little to Milly, as yet, nor did he seem much to notice her. It was his way, first to depress the spirits and sap the self-respect of his charge, and afterwards to crush them with the iron heel of his selfish, bullying, blustering tyranny. No *feeling* need they at-

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tempt to display near *him*. He did not allow such things. They must calculate with precision upon but one thing; and that was, to obey him. And through fear, and fear alone, they were made to do it.

Milly sat in the room where all the rest congregated in the evening, sometimes half dozing upon the hard bench that was her only seat, and some of the time compelled to listen to the talk, idle as it all was, of the strange beings around her. During these summer evenings they were not allowed a light in the room, but sat in the darkness, the summer wind drawing in through the open windows, and the babbling of their voices sounding like the drowsy drone of a beehive on the still air of the evening.

Snarly Moll she already knew, for no one could stay in that place long and not know her. She was the one who sat on the floor, munching her supper, on Milly's first entrance into the place. Crazy Jane was a character she dreaded. There was a wildness in her eyes, as they looked straight into your own, that bred a half fear for what she might wish to do to you. Old Ponce was as much in the habit of making himself observed as any of them, sitting sometimes with his round-eyed spectacles across his nose, resting his hands upon the top of his high walking stick, and jabbering perseveringly to any one who had the patience to listen to him.

As soon as he had fairly got the idea into his brain that Milly was a new comer to that place, he thought it belonged to him to go through the confused history of his sieges and his battles again, ostensibly that he might gratify in this way his own love of narration; but in reality, that Milly, as all the rest had been, in their turn, might be enabled to understand the length, and breadth, and depth of his experiences.

So one evening he began:—

"When I was a-fightin' in the last war," said he, resting his hands as usual on the top of his stick and winking fiercely, "when I was off down to Stun'tun Pint, and the British ship——"

"I don't *believe* you was ever to Stun'tun Pint, Ponce!" interrupted Snarly Moll, kicking up her heels from the floor. "*What* an old Ponce *you* be, sure for it now!"

"Yes, yes; *I* was there. *I* was over 't the Pint!" said Crazy Jane, wringing her hands gently, and staring thoughtlessly here and there over the floor. "It's an old story, and I've told it a good many times. Yes, yes; *I* was 't the Pint then, too."

Nobody seemed to notice either her or what she said, however.

"You see," said Ponce, continuing, as if thoroughly used to these interruptions, "we made ready for the pesky British frigate when she come up——"

"Make ready, *fire*? Was that it, Ponce?" said Snarly Moll, laughing.

"We was fixin' up a sort o' battery on the shore——"

"Yes, yes," broke in Crazy Jane, repeating the words after him in a very low voice, "it was a sort o' *battery*! That was it! *I* was there; *I* was over 't the Pint, and see it all."

"We hadn't got but one piece o' ordnance nowhere; 'twas all there was round; so we fetched her up to the line"—here he made some curious sort of a gesture, intended to describe either the line itself or the method of getting the gun up to it—"and got ready to let her talk for herself."

"Could she talk as much as *you* do, Ponce?" asked

Moll. "I don't b'lieve it. She couldn't *begin* with *you*, Ponce! Ha! ha! ha!"

"Yes, she did her own talkin', that's what she did," chimed in Crazy Jane, still rubbing her hands and looking very inquisitively around upon the floor. "*I* was there, and I know."

"At fust," said Ponce, moving his whole leg to an easier position, "we had to take it——"

"Yes, that's what we did! We had to take it! I was there, and I know," added Jane.

"You was there?" said Moll, looking drolly up in her face.

"Yes," replied the harmless demented, still directing her attention about the floor, "I was there. I know all about it. I see it all."

"So was *I* there! You're a fool, Jane! You don't know nothing!"

"Yes, *you* was there, too," returned Jane. "It was four and twenty year ago; but you was there, for I *see* you there; and I picked up your head, after a cannon ball had shot it off, and stuck it on your shoulders again."

"Ponce," cried Snarly Moll, "Crazy Jane says *I* was down to the battle o' Stun'tun Pint. *Was* I there? *Was she* there?"

Old Ponce laughed a very imbecile laugh, and went on again.

"But the British ship got on broadside, so 't she raked us all clean. We couldn't stan' that. We had to give it up for a little while. We couldn't get the thunderin' old gun in place quick enough. Gracious! but you ought to ha' heerd them hot cannon balls whiz—whiz by a feller's ears! *How* we hopped, though!" And the worn old veteran, thus rewarded with a poor-

house for his patriotic sacrifice of a leg, raised his stick high from the floor in the excitement of his narration.

By this time, little Kit, the cripple, had drawn himself quite near the old man, and was listening with all intentness to the same narrative he had probably heard a hundred times before. It was a touching tribute of his deep respect for the man who had fought the battles of his country. That country itself had not rewarded him with one half the affection.

"Don't *hit* me with your stick, Ponce," cried Snarly Moll, lifting her hand supplicatingly. "You're ferocious when you get to fightin' your wars round here."

"But we got the advantage, somehow, at last," continued the veteran soldier. "Nobody else thought we should; but *I* thought we should. I see the British fellers didn't haul their ship round, jest as if they understood the spot they'd got on to. I see it myself, and I told 'em so."

"Yes," added Jane, "I was there, too; and I see it, too. I see it all myself, and I knew they'd have to clear."

"Jane," said Snarly Moll, "won't you tell us something you never did see? 'cause I'll go right off and see it myself at once. What is it, Jane?"

"Yes," she replied, "I'll go right off myself and see it, too?"

"Did the British fire on you any more, Ponce?" inquired little Kit, thinking he might venture a word in the midst of the snarl.

"Yes, they fired any more," replied Jane, to whom the question was by no means addressed. "But they had to clear. I knew they would. I was there myself, and I see it all. Them was brave old times for folks

that was alive then. Folks ain't now as they was once, a good while ago, when I was a girl."

"I don't b'lieve you ever *was* a girl!" exclaimed Snarly Moll, brushing back the tangled red hair from out of her eyes.

"But I *see* it," protested Jane. "I see it all myself!"

"We finally got our old rusty eighteen pounder to bear on the frigate," continued Ponce, "and let fly. Gracious! but you'd ought to ha' been there, to see 'em jump!"

"Yes, *I* was there, and *I* see 'em jump; *I* see 'em let fly," said Crazy Jane.

"Didn't *you* fly, Jane?" asked the saucy Moll.

"Yes, *I* flew. I was there, and I see it all. *I* flew, too!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the roguish tatterdemalion, rolling over on the floor at thinking of the success of her trap for the poor insane woman. "Crazy Jane flew! I'd like to see her fly *now*! I'd give my old shoes, and throw in the bunnet old Flox promised me, if Jane 'd only take a good smart fly over the wood pile!"

"Arter we gi'n 'em *one* grist," said Ponce, devoted only to the absorbing interest of his story, "we kep' it up. There warn't no stoppin' us, then, I tell you."

"O, shet up your long story, Ponce!" cried a coarse woman, in the farther dark corner of the room. "Let somebody else have a chance to talk, won't ye?"

"Who's a talkin', now, but yourself?" asked Snarly Moll, raising herself on her elbow, to give greater force and directness to her question. "Old Ponce's got as good a right to talk as *you* have!"

"That Snarly Moll's a sassy girl!" replied the woman in the corner, indignantly.

"Who says so now?" asked Moll again. "You don't know nothin' about it."

"No, she don't know nothin' about it," added Crazy Jane. "But *I* know somethin' about it. I've *been* there, and I see it all myself."

"*What* do you know about it, Jane?" asked Moll, rather coaxingly than otherwise.

"I know she's *sassy*," said Jane, "for I've *been* there, and I see it all myself."

"We swep' the deck, fore an' aft," went on Ponce. "I could see the British chaps a tumblin' down—tumbly down, one after the other, and a pullin' their corpses up one on another."

"O Ponce! *Fool*, Ponce! *Do* hush your confounded long story about what you never see nor heerd on," again broke forth the female voice from the corner.

"Who's the biggest fool?" venturously asked Snarly Moll, turning her battery again in the direction of the corner.

"Moll, ef I ketch you away from home!" threatened the woman.

"Yes, ketch a white weasel asleep, will ye?" retorted the invincible and energetic girl, never hesitating for a reply.

"I'll tangle your hair worse'n it was ever tangled yet!"

"I'd like to have you *curl* it for me, if you would," said Moll.

"I'll do it some day with the *tongs*!"

"Papers'll do it better'n curlin' tongs," replied Moll.

"Wouldn't you *color* it too?"

To this the woman thought best to make no answer.

Ponce tried to go on.

"They worked their old frigate off soundin's jest as

fast as they any ways could," said he, "and stood out to sea. I see how things was goin', but says I, 'Boys, give it to 'em! Don't let the old gun stop her noise yet! Give it to 'em, boys!' I hadn't more'n got the words out o' my mouth, whack come a big ball they thought they'd make us a partin' present of, and took off my leg!—took it off smack an' smooth! They picked me up, they told me, but I never knew nothin' more about it."

"You *died* then, didn't you, Ponce?" asked Snarly Moll.

"Yes, he died then," answered Crazy Jane for him. "I was there myself. I *see* him die. I see it all myself."

The woman in the corner immediately saw proper to set up a loud noise, something between a shriek and a yell of laughter.

"And you died too, didn't you, Jane?" persisted the roguish girl.

"Yes, I died too. I see it all. I died too. I was there, and I see it all myself!"

Another indescribable shout from the corner.

"I never'll forgit *that* day," said Ponce.

"Nor I, nor I," added Jane, stooping down to pursue her idle habit of touching any part of the floor to which her wild fancy led her.

Little Kit was in deep thought. Milly felt bewildered in the midst of this confusion. Her thoughts strayed away to her mother, and the sadness that shadowed her heart would have settled down permanently there for the night, had not the shrill call of Caleb Flox, summoning all to bed, dissipated, in some degree, the influence that was slowly creeping over her.

She took up her line of march, therefore, with the rest, laying away her weary frame on a little crib that stood next that of the woman whose fierce voice from the corner had so much startled her during the evening.

## CHAPTER XI.

### MILLY AND MOLLY.

THE next morning, not a long time after her breakfast, Milly strolled off by herself in the direction of the river. Her thoughts were more saddened than ever, and from being an unwilling witness to the daily scenes that transpired around her, she hardly knew or cared whither she was going, only let her find solitude. Alone, she could give herself up, without interruption, to the whole of her grief.

She wandered down to the river again, to the same spot where Adam and she had before sat. There was a loose pile of hewn lumber near, and to the farther end of this, next the river bank, she directed her steps. One plank, longer than the rest, jutted out towards the river, its extremity reaching quite to the edge of the bank. Upon this, in about the middle of it, Milly sat down. The rest of the pile served to conceal her from view.

The river was glassy and beautiful to look upon, sailing down so silently just at her feet, over which the willows and the birches hung their boughs, mirroring their many leaves in its surface. The morning air was deliciously fresh, and she could not help contrasting it with the impure atmosphere that infected the rooms of the poorhouse. And in her thoughts, too, danced pleasant comparisons between the close and stifled life of the town, up whose streets these sweet summer breaths

from the meadows never came, and the open, broad, generous life of the country. The latter was immeasurably more welcome to her heart. Yet that heart was unsatisfied. It still yearned for something it had not. It felt an aching void that no one near her then had the power to supply.

And while she sat there so musingly on the hewn log, her eyes following the sluggish course of the dark water, the sound as of some one jumping from a height fell on her ear, and she felt herself jarred quite thoroughly. Looking round, in no little affright, she spied Snarly Moll.

"So you steal off here to be alone, do ye?" saluted Moll, standing on the spot where her jump had landed her. "Afraid o' the rest of us? Don't you think we're *bears* or *bisons*? or what is't that makes you run away from us all so?"

"I love to be alone," answered Milly, not without some considerable fear of her questioner.

"*Alone!* and who *don't* like to be alone, when they can git out o' the noise of sich a house as Caleb Flox's. But the thing on't is, we don't *allow* sich doin's here. We live together. We're all alike, the whole on us. This ain't no place to play the part o' big feelin's. What makes your hair curl so? *mine* don't!"

Milly told her that it curled itself. She didn't know what made it do so.

"But come, let's find out. I snum, I'll *know*, if it costs me a little trouble!" and she glided along towards her on the beam. "I want to make *mine* curl, and if I find out what's the reason yours does, I guess I can git mine into jest the same way."

Milly begged her not to come too near her. She did not tell her why, but it was plain that her fear of Snarly

Moll was very great, and that the latter meant to avail herself richly of the discovery.

"Do you think I'm a *bear*? Do you think I'm goin' to eat you up?" asked Moll.

The child made no answer, yet she trembled from her head to her feet.

"I tell you, I want to see your *hair*!" said Moll, advancing still nearer. "Shake out your curls! I'll see 'em, if it costs me —"

"Please don't come too near," pleaded Milly.

"Please don't come too near!" mimicked Moll. "Who's a *comin'* too near! What are you afraid of? You don't think I've come to eat you up, or carry you off, do you?"

"I wanted to be alone," said Milly.

"And I don't think it's *good* for you," added she. "You'll get cold, settin' here on this log so. Come, get up."

"I wish you wouldn't, Snarly Moll."

Milly called her by that *sobriquet* before thinking whether it was proper or not. Every body else thus entitled her, and she was hardly mature enough yet to consider whether it would be altogether as pleasing from her lips as from those of older acquaintance.

Moll fired anew at once.

"Who told *you* to call me Snarly Moll? Who *said* my name was Snarly Moll? I'll have you to know that I'm jest as good as *you* be. You live in the poorhouse, and so do I. What's the difference, now? Snarly Moll!" — she spoke it very sneeringly, — "as if *I* was any more snarly than *you* be! You're a little *fool*! *that's* what you be! and I've a precious good mind to duck you for your sass!"

"Indeed," mildly ventured Milly, seeing that she had

unintentionally wounded her feelings, "I didn't mean to say so. I didn't know what I *did* say. I'm sorry for it, Moll."

"Moll! *Snarly* Moll! there it is agin! I don't *believe* you're sorry for it, and all your talk is *stuff*! Call me Snarly Moll agin, if you dare!"

"I never will," said Milly. "I didn't know what else to call you. All the rest do."

"But that's no reason why *you* should, you little —"

"Don't, Moll!" pleaded Milly, desiring to check her rising wrath.

"Moll, agin! I tell you I won't take it from such low-bred folks as *you* belong to! Don't call me that agin, now!"

"What *shall* I call you?" asked Milly, submissively.

"Call me any thing! Call me nothing! But mind you don't call me Snarly Moll any more!"

The child was silent with chagrin and fear. She dreaded to open her lips again, lest she might utter something at which Moll might unaccountably be offended.

"Who *are* you, *any* how?" asked Moll, after eying her fiercely for several minutes. "Where did you *come* from?"

No reply. Milly was afraid to answer.

"Hain't you got no mother?"

"No," said Milly.

"Nor father, nuther?"

"I never knew him."

"That's odd! But who brought you here? Where did you live before you come here?"

"At Mrs. Trevelyn's."

"Soho! Then you're one o' the *rich* ones, hey?"

And because the old man killed himself—so they say—you had to come to the poorhouse? *That's* a pretty fix! Where's the rest of 'em? What did they send *you* here for, and not come themselves?"

"They didn't love me," said Milly, in a very touching tone. "*Nobody* loves me!"

And, upon this, she burst into a fit of violent weeping.

The heart of Snarly Moll was reached. Every other plea might have failed to touch her sympathies, but this deep evidence of sorrow stirred them all with a powerful influence.

"Don't cry!" she said, her tone entirely changed.

The turn of her manner, but now so unfeeling and cruel, made Milly cry more than ever.

"Poor thing! I pity you; I do," said she to herself.

Unused to such sights, she hardly knew how to treat them. Her feelings were honest enough, and earnest enough, at bottom, but she had never yet been taught how to smooth their surface so that others might behold the reflections in them.

"Don't cry so!" she said again. "I'd rather you'd strike me than to see you cry so! I didn't mean to say hard things to you. I'm different from *you*, you see. I don't go to work the same way. But don't cry so, I beg of you! It won't do no good, and it may do a good deal o' hurt. What makes you *think* you hain't got no friends?"

"Nobody says any thing to me," said Milly. "I'm all alone here. My mother is dead. I don't know who to go to. I can't *help* crying!" And she renewed it again.

Moll went now and sat down on the log beside her, intertwining her arm about her waist.

"You *have* got *one* friend," said she, trying to comfort the child. "*I'll* be your friend, if nobody else will. You may call *me* your friend, if you want to. Will you?"

Milly could not answer yet.

"I didn't *mean* nothing," she went on, "when I told you sich hard things. I'm sorry I said 'em now. I didn't think you had sich feelin's. I never *knew* any body that had sich feelin's before. *Don't* cry any more! I'll promise to do what I can to make you comfortable!"

Milly tried to dry her tears, and Moll sat still holding her about the waist and musing on the hidden life of her little companion. There was something she could not explain to herself, in being thus thrown by the side of one so fresh from the great outer world. And as soon as the child could sufficiently compose herself, Moll went into a long list of interrogations respecting her life, the town and its attractive mysteries, the paved streets,—which she thought must be something "wonderful cur'ous" to see,—the fine ladies, and the crowded buildings.

The fancy of Snarly Moll had taken fire before she had talked long on the matter, and she declared to Milly, that as soon as an opportunity offered she should herself walk those same streets, and let her own eyes look on those same buildings. It was, henceforth, to be the one purpose and ambition of her heart.

## CHAPTER XII.

### A BIT OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

"You've told me so much about yourself," said Snarly Moll, "that I'll tell you, now, all *I* know about *myself*."

And so she began to lay before Milly a sketch of her life—if such vegetation as hers could be called a "life."

"I don't know *where* I was born, nor nothin' about it. I s'pose 'twas *somewheres*, though, or I'd never been *here*. Folks never *told* me any thing, and so what I know I've had to guess. There was no use o' my guessin' I had red hair, though, or a freckled face."

Milly caught herself inadvertently looking in her face.

"*Ain't* it freckled?" said Moll. "*Ain't* my hair red? Did you ever see any thing *redder*?"

Milly laughed, and told her that she had.

"What was it, now? Come, you shall tell me, now!"

The child hesitated, and at last answered, "Brick."

"Brick?" said Moll. "What's *that*? I never see none o' that!"

"They make houses of them in the city," answered Milly.

"Yes, and them same houses I'll see with these very eyes, too, some day! I'll see how folks live and look for myself! I don't mean to be kept out o' the world no longer; and if I was in *your* place, *I* wouldn't, neith-

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er. But this ain't gettin' on much with my *story*. The first I ever knew o' myself, or who I was, or who I belonged to, was when I was up in the town o' Derby. That's a good many miles away from here, and p'raps you don't know where 'tis. But let me tell you, now, Derby's no fool of a place. And it's got a poorhouse a leetle ahead, even, o' *this*; and this you don't come across in *every* holler you stumble into, nuther.

"They use' to give us ruther tougher times at the Derby poorhouse than what we git here. There, the *man* was the man o' the house; here, it's jist the other way. We had a queerer set o' boarders there than what we've got here; a good many crazy ones,—a good deal crazier than Jane,—and a couple o' fools, too."

"Fools!" exclaimed Milly.

"Yes, real *idiots*! Didn't you never see one?"

Milly told her that she never did.

"One of 'em was a woman, and the other a boy; and they use' to draw more folks to the house—strangers, you know—than all the rest of us together. One o' the crazy men had to be shet up, night and day, in a cage, up in the garret; and I use' to hear him howl sometimes all night, so't nobody in the house could sleep. We all called him Van. I never heard sich a howl from a human bein' in all my life.

"Don't try to tell me nothin' about the poorhouse life; I know all about it. I've lived in three poorhouses a'ready, and I'm thinkin' this'll be the *last* one. Shouldn't *you* like to get away? Do you like to stay in sich an awful place as this? and you had a *mother*, too, and rich relations, which *I* never had?"

Milly signified that she was exceedingly unhappy here. She could not say more, then; and if she had been able, she would have lacked the courage.

"Wal, I'll tell you what," said Moll, in reply, "when I git myself safe off to the city, I'll have *you* come. You hain't got no relations, I know; but what o' that? *I'll* be your relations; that is, if you'll promise me beforehand that you won't *cry*! I can't hear you cry, and I don't b'lieve any body else can. But that's not jest to the point. The way I got out o' the Derby poor-house was something like this. There was a woman that come to the place one day, a real fine-dressed woman, and she looked for all the world like a lady. She seemed to think I was a object of pity; and so pity on me she took. She got the woman at the poor-house to give me away, and then she took me home with her.

"I was pleased, at first; but it soon got to be an old story. I found out that her husband didn't do right, for some reason or other, and, finally, he left her entirely. So she had to break up housekeepin', and went off somewhere, I never knew where. And I was put on to *another* town.

"I didn't like *that* poorhouse, somehow, as well as I liked the 'tother one. They didn't have such a set of crazy folks and fools, to be sure; but I'd rather put up with them than with a good many things I had to. The woman was savage as a beast. I was as afraid of her as I could live. She never stopped to tell a body when she was goin' to whip 'em, but put on, full vengeance.

"I remember how I had to ketch it, one day, jest because I'd gone and got the bottom o' my dress so wet, a-cowsloppin'. I'd been down across the medder, and I thought as how as if I *did* git wet a little mite, *she* wouldn't care, as long's she got the cowslops fresh and good for dinner. But I was mistaken, for once in my life, if I never was before. I was standing there in the

kitchen, holding my greens in my hand, and the very first thing *I* knew o' Miss Wetherby's bein' about, she ketched me right here by the hair of my head," — Moll here explained to Milly how the thing was done, — "and whirled me round and round, and all the time backwards, to the door! 'I'll teach ye!' says she. 'I'll teach ye to go off into the wet grass and spile the good clothes I put on ye! *Next* time ye run off you'll tell *me*!' And so she kept a pullin' and haulin' me round for ever so long.

"*That* was more'n what my blood was goin' to let me stand. I didn't do nothin', *then*. I didn't *say* nothin'. I jest grit my teeth; and the water was standin' in my eyes all the time, too, she'd pulled my hair so hard! I reckon she wanted to pull it all up by the roots. So when it come along night, thinks I to myself, thinks I, 'Moll, *now's* your time! If *ever* you're goin' away from this *awful* place, now's your best time! Perhaps it'll be your last chance!' And away I *did* go, certain enough.

"It was a dark night, but I found the way from where I slept to the outside door, and that's all I wanted. I didn't tell nobody of my plan, and didn't ask nobody's advice. I did it all on my own account. All that night I walked. Every house I come to, the next day, I stopped and begged for somethin' to eat; and in some places I asked the people if they wanted to hire a girl for help. They would look down at me, as if they wondered what such a little one as *me* was worth, for work; and then they'd shake their heads, doleful like, and say they didn't want no help. But they all stared at me so strange, as if they thought I must be a runaway from somebody. And so I went on, and the most that troubled me was, that somebody'd be after

me and carry me back where I come from. But they didn't.

"I got into Byeboro', by'm by; and here I've been ever sence. The seleckmen tried to make me tell where I come from; but I never'd tell. I'd no notion o' bein' sent back to Miss Wetherby's, and gettin' my hair, every spear on't, pulled out o' my head; for it's jest as good to *me* as other folks' hair is to *them*, if 'tis red. I can't help the *color*, you know!"

Milly seemed deeply interested, both in the narration of Snarly Moll and in the manner in which she went through with it; and when, an hour after, they together rose from their seat on the log, they appeared the best of living friends. The mildness of Milly had completely won over the other one's heart.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### IN AND OUT.

ADAM DROWNE, in his wanderings, had got back to the Byeboro' poorhouse again.

He found Milly by the river, whither he had gone in quest of her, and at once proceeded to break to her his purpose.

"I've got back again," said he, his blue eyes sparkling.

There he stood, indeed, with the same indented hat on his white head, and the same darned coat on his back.

"I've been thinkin' of you," said he, "ever since I've been gone. I told you, you know, that this wasn't the place for you."

"But I've no better one to go to," protested Milly.

"You mayn't *know* that; nor *I* mayn't know it, neither. Perhaps there's some sort of a place to be found. What do you think, now?"

"I don't know," replied the child.

"No, I know you don't. But that ain't it. What we want, *now*, is to find it; and, what's more, I think I *can*!"

Milly's eyes lighted up immediately. A new expression, more pleasant than any she had worn since she had been confined there, broke out over her countenance like sunshine. Adam Drowne read the meaning of it all at a single glance.

"Should you *like* to go away from here?" he asked.

"If I knew where to go," answered Milly.

"But if I should take you to a good place," pursued Adam, "would you *then*?"

"I would like to go away from here," she replied.

"Then you *shall*! There's no more to be said. I'll go off with you myself. I'll take you where I'll find some kind friends for you."

"Have *you* got any friends?" innocently inquired Milly.

"Umph! They're all dead, long ago! But I can find 'em a plenty for *you*. Will you go with me? Will you *go*?"

"But I don't know *where*."

"Where? why, where *I* go."

"But you haven't got any friends. They're all dead. Then where will you go?"

"Milly," said Adam, lowering his voice, "look here."

The child gave him her undivided attention. He had succeeded in enlisting her interest completely.

"When I go from here, nobody knows where I go to, of course. I wander, and that's all any body knows about it. I go into houses that nobody'd believe me, if I told 'em. There's some pretty fine houses, too, that I stop at and get my breakfast, or my dinner, or my supper, or, mayhap, sleep in all night. Nobody thinks of turning me off, and I never have to ask a favor of any. If it's meal time, or if it *ain't* meal time, as soon as I go through their doors, they say to me, 'In a minute, Adam, as soon as we can get the table set for you!' and so I wait for 'em to get me what they have to eat, and set up to the table and eat it. There ain't no questions asked at all. I have my meals to myself. And then, when I get through, I set a while and rest me, and go on again."

"But people *would* ask questions," said Milly, "if *I* was with you."

"Would they?" returned Adam, a little confused. "What makes you think so?"

"They would wonder who the little girl with you was."

Adam's eyes were fixed upon her face, and they sparkled strangely enough. Perhaps he had not expected to find her so astute an objector.

"But they wouldn't *know*," said he.

"Wouldn't they ask?"

"Well, what then?"

"You would have to tell them."

"No, I shouldn't. Why should I?"

"You would *have* to! What should you say, if you didn't?"

"Say nothing."

Milly smiled.

"Get up and walk out doors."

She suddenly became very sober in her look.

"And never go into that house again!" added Adam, with much earnestness in his tone.

"But if the people should tell Mr. Flox of it?" again suggested Milly.

"How'll they ever see Mr. Flox, now? Nobody knows him where *I* go."

"If he should follow after me?" said Milly.

"He'll never do *that*, dear! he'll never do *that*! He'll be too glad to get rid of you. He'll make so much the more for losing you."

Milly was very thoughtful.

"I'll warrant you," said Adam, "that he will give you away the first chance he has. The first person that comes here and takes a fancy to you, he'll give you to;

and then you'll go, you don't know where. You'd much better take your chance with *me*, and you may be pretty sure that you wouldn't get any worse place than it is here, or where Mr. Flox might send you. Come, what do you say? We'll go at once!"

"I'm afraid," said Milly.

"Poh! poh!" said Adam. "When there's nothing at all to be afraid of! Mr. Flox'll never come after you, and I'll take care that he'll never hear of you again."

Yet there was something fearful to the child in the very thought of changing her home, though the change was to be all in her own favor. The reality that was then and there about her she well understood. She could comprehend it all, in its length and breadth. But the future was untried. She knew nothing of what it might have in store for her. Even had it all been sketched out to her vision, she would instinctively have shrunk from contemplating it, for it was something whose reality she could not yet grasp and comprehend.

"Do you hesitate *now*?" he pursued. "You know that I don't think this is such a place as you ought to live in, and I never did think so. You must go away from here. I can get you as good a place to live in as you ever will get, I'll promise; and then, if you don't happen to be contented, why, I'll try it again. Will you go with me?"

She hardly knew at first what to say. She cast her eyes thoughtfully on the ground, and for a long time kept them there.

Adam, however, had no thought of losing the advantage he had apparently gained thus far; so he continued talking to her while she pondered on the project, telling her of the new friends she would have, and the new places she would see, and the new feelings she would

enjoy. If Adam Drowne was never earnest about any thing before, he was certainly earnest about this. Milly's welfare had become an object of the deepest interest to him. He seemed to see some secret in her life that another would have failed to see. One would naturally have thought that there must be some peculiar reason for his attachment to her, and she a mere child.

He carried his point, however, at last. Milly promised him that she would leave that place, and with him. He enjoined the strictest secrecy and silence on her, and they separated, Adam not wishing to be seen talking with her by any of the rest of the household.

The second night after this, all things being ready, when the house was hushed in slumber, Adam softly stole along the entries until he reached the room where Milly with the others slept, and slowly opened the door and looked in. The moonlight was streaming pleasantly through the windows, and lay in silver whiteness across the hard oak floor. He caught the deep breathing of the sleepers, all of them passed from their daily misery into a state of blessed forgetfulness.

Stepping stealthily along a-tiptoe, he found the little bed where the child lay, and, leaning down over her, saw by the reflected light of the moon that she was asleep. He touched her gently on the shoulder, thinking to waken her easily. But she was buried in a deep sleep. Poor child! the troublesome and saddening thoughts of each day made her sleep as sound almost as the sleep of death.

Finding that this gentle means did not rouse her, he resorted to more earnest ones, and took hold of both her shoulders, lifting her up in the bed. The name "Mother" was faintly whispered from her lips. Adam

Drowne's heart beat quicker, and his impulse to rescue her became suddenly stronger and greater than ever.

Milly awoke after a little shaking, and gazed wildly about her.

"It's me, Milly," said Adam. "It's only *me*! Come, dress yourself as softly as you can, and let's be gone! Come, I will wait for you in the entry."

It took but a minute or two for the child to go through with the task of clothing herself for her journey, and she stood by the side of her newly-found friend.

"Are you all ready?" asked Adam.

"Yes," answered Milly.

And he led her softly out through the door that he had unfastened.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### A JOURNEY BEGUN.

ROUND and red the great bright moon hung in the sky, as they issued forth from the door of the Byeboro' poorhouse, offering to light this oddly-matched pair on their journey. The branches of the trees, the boughs, the leaves, and even the lighter sprays were pencilled delicately upon the ground, and the poorhouse itself cast a long black shadow behind it in the edge of the meadow.

The frogs were to be heard faintly whirring at the distant marshes and pools, and crickets had just begun to make their cry heard all the night long in the grass. They passed across the chip yard quietly, and by the dilapidated corn crib, under which the pigs slept and the few fowls roosted, and had finally crossed the little bridge of flat stones that gave them a dry passage over the brook that babbled its story through the still night watches, and then Milly cast a quick glance behind her, and drew a deeper breath, as if she felt safe. Well might the child have thought that she was escaping from the jaws of a creature more hungry and cruel than Want merely — the relentless jaws of the poorhouse, where paupers were sold out from year to year to the man, no matter whom, who would keep them alive for the least money!

Adam did not seem inclined to say much as they went on, keeping his thoughts quite to himself. They

travelled steadily through the village street, whose white houses glistened pleasantly among the waving elms and shading maples, Milly looking about her and wondering. When they started from the poorhouse it was just midnight, and at three o'clock in the morning they had made a distance of eight miles. This was rapid walking for Milly, and must have greatly wearied her; but her spirits, and the frequent representations of Adam, served to keep her up. If any thing else had been needed, there was the fear of return to the hands of Caleb Flox again, and that was enough.

Adam had thoughtfully provided food enough, of a simple kind, to supply their wants until they should be far out of the reach of Byeboro'. It was his intention to keep as much away from the main road as possible after daylight, while for the night he had no fear. When the faint rays of day began to stream up from the east, they had toiled to the summit of a long hill, from which they commanded a dim and distant view of the town they had just left. On this hill they stopped a while to rest.

They had their faces turned to the east. After the gray light had begun to steal up over the edge of the sky, driving back the legions of gloomy shadows that had held possession of the field of the heavens all night, then came dancing and flickering along brighter colors, not yet tints, but foreshadowings of the tints. And next the veriest shades of tints themselves, now shooting and spouting up like flames from some vast crater below, and now melting and blending all over and into the face of the heavens.

And then the colors flamed up, some with the glow of orange, and some of copper, and some of crimson, and of purple, and of red. And now the fires, flaming

like waving flambeaux; bright, and dazzling, and golden; leaping and writhing upwards, as if they would reach the very zenith and burn out the shadows that still lingered there; spreading and circling on every side; lighting up the eastern hills till they became ruddy in the brightness. It was a splendid picture, the whole of it. Adam and Milly both stood mute before it, and one might have taken them for the true "fire worshippers."

"Did you ever see any thing like that before?" asked Adam.

Milly only shook her head. Her heart was full of what she had seen.

Just then the great globe of fire itself bounded up from behind the hills, and the earth and sky were lighted with smiles. The sun gilded the fleecy fogs that were creeping up the hillsides; and made molten gold of the little streams that wound along so quietly about their feet; and tipped the tree tops with a wealth of colors; and made bright carpets of the distant farms, their patches, and figures, and squares all woven together as in a loom; and tinged anew the dull clouds that were drifting over the heavens, till they looked like gay argosies, freighted with the wealth of which they had been in quest.

Milly stood and admired, and wondered; and all the time she was mute.

"Let's eat our breakfast now," broke in Adam; and the whole charm that the silence had helped create was immediately broken.

They sat down upon a log that was lying across the edge of the hill, where a woodman had, the year before, felled a huge chestnut tree, and Adam proceeded to take the frugal meal from his pocket, — it was carefully fold-

ed in a piece of brown paper, — and, distributing equal portions of it, as carefully rolled up the rest in the paper again. Then they fell to. Their long walk had served to whet their appetites sharply, and the brilliancy of the new morning, fresh with its airs and its dews, gave the food an additional relish.

"We shall walk but a little ways this forenoon," said Adam; "so, when it begins to come on hot, we'll rest somewhere. Perhaps you'll feel like taking a little nap by that time. Are you tired?"

"Not much," replied Milly, determined to be a heroine.

"Not much!" laughed Adam. "But you *will* be, come 'leven o'clock. You'll want a resting spell then. Leastways, 'twill be best for you. I take one myself, then, sometimes, when I'm travelling; and I imagine your little feet'll ache by that time. Don't you want me to carry you a little piece, when we get along?"

"O, no," said the child, astonished at such a proffer. "I'm *sure* I can walk myself! And you were so good to take me along with you, too! O, no; *I* can walk!"

"Well, so be it, then. Are you done your breakfast? Have you rested long enough? The sun's getting well up, you see."

Milly signified that she was both well rested and quite ready for commencing the journey again. And, taking her by the hand, Adam Drowne struck off into the road again.

He said little to her as they went along, except to answer such of her numerous questions as he chose to answer, but kept his lips mumbling over the fragmentary thoughts or fancies that entered his brain, Milly looking up in his face, now and then, to try to learn what he meant. Sometimes he swung his disen-

gaged hand quite furiously to and fro, and then his lips worked much more vigorously than ever before, and his head shook this way and that with great emphasis. There was a secret, and a great secret, wrapped up in his life, and even a child like Milly was led to make the discovery.

They travelled on through long reaches of cool forest border, the road winding on through the pleasantest shades, and streaked on either side the cart track with lines of thick turf; and heard the sharp cry of the squirrels on the walls, or among the boughs, as they gambolled about, in the middle of this warm summer forenoon; and watched the glinting of the little brooks, as they stole along through the edge of the woodland, emerging pure and clear from the dark, boggy places that sought to dam them up, and then slipping away into beds of cool, green moss, and so down into the secluded forest silences.

And over hot roads they went, too, where they could see the summer heat rise and waver above the dusty ground; and where the flowers, and even the grass, seemed panting for breath by the baking roadside; and where were no brooks that had not long ago dried up in their shallow beds, and only little muddy pools offered the sight of their waters, streaked with marl and clay. At length Milly exclaimed that a house was in sight. Adam had been looking steadily at the ground, and did not see it. As soon as she gave the intelligence to him, he said that they would go round to the barn, and there rest themselves.

"But I had rather rest myself in the house," said Milly. "Only see how cool it looks all round it, all that green grass before the door, and those trees that are so shady, too! Let's go to the house!"

Adam told her that he was not quite sure it would be safe.

"I *know* they won't hurt *you*," said she. "They won't ask you where *I* came from. Come; I'll go into the house. Was you ever here before?"

"No," said Adam; "and that's why I am afraid."

"Then I ain't afraid a bit," returned she. "They'll think I'm *your* girl; and I'll go in. I won't tell them that we run away from Byeboro' poorhouse, if they *ask* me."

"You must promise me certain," said Adam. "You mustn't talk at all. Only don't talk!"

"No; no," she answered, "I'll keep my words *so* close to myself! I'll not tell them a thing of where we came from!"

And after the delivery of a few more injunctions from Adam, they walked on in the direction of the house.

It *was* a pleasant place, as the quick eyes of the child had first told her. The carpet of grass that was spread before the door was soft looking-enough to roll upon. The maple trees thrust their boughs and leaves quite up to the windows. A sheep was grazing upon the lawn, keeping the grass cropped close to the ground. There were no blinds upon the dwelling, but the grateful shade that had been provided with such tastefulness seemed to make all amends.

They crossed the grass plot, and walked round to the back door. It was shut. Adam knocked loudly, and afterwards more loudly, with his fist; but no one answered. For several minutes he kept trying to raise some one of the inmates; but none came to the door. They had apparently all gone away.

## CHAPTER XV.

### AFOOT AND ALONE.

"THERE'S nobody here," said Adam. "I guess they've all gone. Are you *very* tired, Milly?"

She did not want to say outright that she was, but her looks betrayed the true state of the case sufficiently.

"We must have a little sleep," said he, looking at her. "I see how 'tis; we must go to the barn."

And he conducted the little wanderer over the back of a gentle knoll to a brown barn that was nestled in the cosy hollow beyond. They entered this, and climbed to the remnant of the mow upon the loft. Carrying clean and sweet hay enough to one spot to suffice for a comfortable bed and pillow for Milly, he bade her stretch out her weary limbs on this rustic couch, while he lay in an opposite corner and tried to fall asleep. And following the advice given, in less than ten minutes she was sound asleep. And Adam followed along but a short time after.

It was something to arrest the attention of any one who might have looked in there at that hour, to see that child of innocence and misfortune so quietly slumbering, perchance dreaming, on that coarse bed of hay; one little arm placed carefully under her head, and the other crossed so prettily over her breast; her lips slightly parted, and a pleasant smile still lingering about them; her auburn hair tangled about her shoulders, the haystalks intertwined with their silken fibres; and that

sweet look of innocence, pure as the expression of a seraph, resting so lightly on her countenance, as if she feared nothing, hoped for all things, and was at heart at love with all the world. It was a sight such as few see in this every-day life in which they go through the world; a sort of dream that plays with their waking thoughts sometimes, or leads them on to a new existence in the stillness of their night slumbers.

For quite an hour they slept. Adam was the first to wake. He rose from his bed, and walked slowly in the direction of the child.

As the picture greeted him, — one to which his eyes were little accustomed, — he stood for some time before it, regarding it in silence. With the rapidity of thought he went back again to his days of childhood, — for even a man with as white a head as Adam Drowne must have had a childhood, in many points, just like this, — losing himself among the genial and sunny memories of that former time, his eyes moistening with the sights that again rose and swam in them — sights of green meadows, with boys clapping broad-brimmed straw hats over butterflies that had lit on the clover bells, and of lawns where children trooped to the light and airy tread of their own spirits, and of pleasant gardens full of blooming flowers, and of summer mornings pictured out so palpably on the glowing landscape, and of churches, and mothers, and home.

All these, and much more than these, filled and fired the poor wanderer's fancies. All these he saw in the sweet expression that was as radiant as some rare vision upon the countenance of the sleeping child. His heart laughed again, as it laughed within him in his fresh boyhood, when he caught her faint but luminous smile. Again his brain swam with fragments of the

olden feelings that just draped their lowest edges against it as they swept across; and he grew dreamy with this sudden return of the old-time thoughts. He was falling unconsciously into a reverie.

Just at that moment the child awoke. As she opened her pleasant eyes they stared wildly at Adam, as if she would ask him by a single look who he was and what he wanted. It was some little time before he seemed fully to recover himself.

"Come, are you rested?" at length he asked.

Milly sat upright on the hay, and now began to rub her eyes.

"Have you had a good nap?" he pursued, looking up at the swallows that were swarming and twittering about the window of the old barn.

"Yes," replied Milly; "but I feel lame."

"I expected your long walk would make you a little stiff at first," said he; "but you'll soon get over that as you begin to move again. We'll start on, if you're ready."

Milly moved to the door after him, and they went out together. This time they did not go to the house where they had vainly called before, but took a circuitous path through the meadows and a piece of tanglewood, and finally emerged upon the open road again at a point where it forked, and where Adam hesitated.

"I wonder which way *this* one leads," said he to himself, and pointing in the direction of that on the left hand. "I'm sure I should want to take the one that would carry us farthest from Byeboro'."

"And so should I!" exclaimed the child, whom he had not suspected of listening to him. "Let's get away as far as we can from Byeboro'!" And she tugged stoutly at his hand towards the left-hand road,

which was sufficient, in his present state of mind, to settle the question. So onward they trudged by the left-hand road, the child looking inquisitively forward and backward at every rod. At length something appeared in sight.

"We'll get over this wall!" said Adam.

"What for?" innocently asked Milly.

"Because we don't know yet who 'tis," answered he. "Can you tell? Can you see? What is it? Is it a man afoot, or a wagon?"

The poor man was moved with a deep excitement, which bordered so closely upon fear that it passed the child's comprehension.

The object in the distance began now to come nearer.

"I can see it *now*," exclaimed the child. "It's a carriage; and there's a lady in it, too."

She seemed delighted with her discovery.

"Yes, and there's a man with her," he immediately added, straining his vision.

"Yes," said Milly, "a gentleman and a lady."

"I wonder who they be!" exclaimed Adam. "Why not get over the wall, Milly, till they get by?"

"Will they touch us?" she inquired. "Will they take me away from you?"

"I don't know," said Adam. "I'm afraid. I don't know *what* may happen."

Milly half stopped, and clung closer to her companion and protector.

"I *hope* they won't stop us," said she, tremulously.

"It's too late now," said Adam. "We can't hide now. They're too close to us. They *see* us. Let's walk on as if nothing was the matter."

And so Milly determined to walk, still clinging to his hand.

The carriage drew near. It came up before them. It was now close upon them. It stopped!

Adam trembled from head to foot, as did Milly likewise. He would keep straight on; but that would be the very means of arousing suspicion that all was not right with him. He would stand perfectly still, waiting to hear what the travellers might have to say; but that was just the hardest thing in the world for him to do.

The gentleman in the carriage relieved him by asking,—

"Which way do you come from, this morning?"

Adam impulsively pointed over his shoulder, without answering a word.

"Can't you tell me how far it is to Milton?" pursued the gentleman.

Adam did not know a bit about it; but he was ready with an answer.

"About twelve miles, I should think, sir."

"A straight road?"

"Yes, sir; near straight as can be."

"Isn't there a stopping-place on beyond here?"

"None that I know of, sir, short of Milton," said Adam.

The gentleman was about gathering up the reins tightly in his hands again, preparatory to driving on, when the lady at his side asked Milly how far she had walked, for she looked very tired.

"Only a few miles," answered Adam for her, while she hung down her head.

"And hasn't many more to walk, I hope," added the lady, regarding her with unaffected sympathy.

"No, ma'am; I think 'twon't be a *very* long time now before we get to our stopping-place;" and Adam made

a forward movement that betrayed his fear and impatience.

"Twelve miles to Milton, you say?" asked the gentleman again, his horse beginning to move.

"About that, I should think, sir," replied Adam, starting on.

And they parted.

Milly looked behind her many times, after the carriage had passed out of sight, fearful that it might return for her; and then, as she finally threw up her eyes so gratefully to her companion, her cheeks were burning with color, and a profuse perspiration stood all over her forehead and temples.

A walk through a piece of wood, to which they fortunately came next, was much needed to cool the fever of her blood, and quiet the deep agitation of her feelings. She felt—and Adam felt hardly less so—that she had narrowly escaped; though from what it would have been impossible for either one to tell.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### BEWILDERMENT.

SOME time in the afternoon, they came to a house at which the cravings of hunger finally compelled Adam to stop.

It was a low-roofed building, of but a single story, and painted red. The very color of it made Milly shudder; for red happened to be the color of the Byeboro' poorhouse. Adam advanced to the door with a courageous manner, and was about to knock against the wall, the door being open, when a woman presented herself. She was old in her looks, with sparse, gray hair and large eyes. There were crows' feet about her temples, and her hands were shrivelled and dried like vellum. She stood waiting for Adam to prefer his request.

"We're nothing but trayellers," said he, "and want something to eat. We've nothing to pay with but thanks; and of them you shall have a plenty. If you'll only feed us with a crust, or a bone, or any thing you feel willing to give away, you shall always be remembered."

The plea was well put, and should have at once reached the woman's sympathies.

"So you've got no *money*, hey?" she inquired, staring at Milly. "Then how happens it that you're travelling? Folks don't generally travel till they put some-

thing to pay their way into their pockets. You don't belong round here, I guess."

"If you'll only give us something to *eat!*" prayed Adam, wishing to break in upon her inquisitiveness. "We're half starved!"

"Sartain! sartain!" said she, and immediately began to put some brown bread and milk upon the table.

"*You* love milk, deary, don't ye?" she asked Milly.

"Yes, ma'am," answered the child.

"Yes; she loves bread and milk," chimed in Adam, wishing to keep the woman from interrogating Milly; "and so do I!"

"Then jest set down there," said she.

And they drew up to a low table of oak, with heavy, carved legs, and a surface as smooth, and hard, and white as oak could by rubbing and scrubbing be made.

The repast was relished exceedingly by both of them; as, indeed, so long a journey and such long fasting would be likely to make it much relished. They sat for some time after they had finished, Adam thinking it a good place to rest himself.

"Where does this road lead me to?" he at length inquired.

"Then you *air* a stranger in these parts!" exclaimed the woman. "Wal, and so I thought you was. This road leads you to the river, if you follow it long enough."

Milly looked at Adam for an explanation.

"To the river?" said he. "What river?"

"Why, don't you know? But you're a stranger here! Why, to the river where the boats come up—to the Hudson. It's a great river, and not a great many miles away from here, either."

"Is there a village there?" asked Adam.

"Sartain. Where should there be one, if not there?"

There was a brief silence.

"Where are you goin' with that gal?" she recommenced. "It's a long ways for her to the river."

Adam did not vouchsafe a reply.

"Deary," pursued the woman, addressing Milly, "where did you come from? You're a purty thing, now, and I'm thinkin' it's a shame to keep you walkin' so. Where did you come from, deary?"

"She came from a good ways off," interposed he.

"Is she yours, then?"

Adam hesitated, looking at her and at the floor.

"She *ain't* yours, and any body can see that for themselves. Where did you get her, now? Where be you goin' to carry her to?"

"Come," said Adam, addressing Milly, and himself rising to his feet. "We'd better be going."

"You had, ef you're thinkin' o' gittin' to the river *to-night*," said the woman. "But it's too bad to carry that poor child round in that sort of a way! It's *too much* for her!"

Adam led her out at the door.

"We're *very* much obliged," said he, as soon as he found himself fairly out of the house. "God bless you for your kindness!"

"But I'm afraid he never will *you*, ef you think o' takin' that child on to the river sich a hot day as this! Why not leave her here with me, and go on alone? I'll take the best care of her."

Milly clung closer to him, as if even then she feared she might be taken away.

"O, don't *want* to stay, eh?" said she, seeing the child's symptoms of fear. "Well, then, go on! and joy go with ye both! I hope you won't brile in this sun; that's all."

And the poor wanderer pushed on down into the road again, Milly confidingly keeping close to him at every step. The simple attention that she excited from every one that saw her was what served to keep her in a state of constant alarm. She would have had it otherwise, but it was a something against which neither herself nor Adam had power to make provision.

The remainder of that afternoon they kept on their way. As the evening began to fall, the long shadows creeping stealthily up over the heavens as the red sun went down, Adam felt puzzled where to pass the night. If it should be at a house, he stood in danger of finally losing the child. Every motive induced him not to think of that. He had intended, it is true, to procure her a good home somewhere, but he felt that he was not far away enough from Byeboro' yet. And so he kept on.

"Shan't I carry you *now*?" he would frequently ask the child.

"I am not tired; I can walk," was her invariable and prompt reply.

After dusk they came to the wide door of a huge smithy, where great fires were roaring within, and sooty men were bringing down heavy blows upon large bars of iron, and bright sparks, like meteors, were flashing and flying this way and that from under the heads of the hammers; and there by the door for a long time they stood, Adam lost in the roar of his own swift thoughts, and Milly in the roar of the great bellows that blew the fires.

The workmen glanced round upon them, but did not stop their work. Here was one place where they might stop and look at human beings, begrimed and blackened though they were, and not feel afraid of questions.

Up the wide throats of the narrow chimneys the fires kept flaming as the bellows lifted; and the bars were white with heat when they took them out of the coals and placed them across the anvils; and the fiery flakes flew every where as the hammers pounded and made their crystal ring. There was something extremely novel to the child in the dusky place, thus peopled with sooty beings that looked like Vulcans, and in the bright fires, and the rows of iron shoes that hung from long poles running across the beams overhead, and the ringing of the hammers upon the anvils. She found her head full of wonder, and would have been glad to ask a hundred questions at once; but her puny voice could no more have been heard in the roar of that place than the faint pipings of a sparrow in the rush of a storm. All that she could do, therefore, was to look and wonder. The picture of the old Byeboro' poorhouse came up to her again, — she could see it in the red coals, — and her heart gratefully acknowledged the contrast between Caleb Flox and even men that looked like these stalwart and smutty smiths.

She looked up to the heavens. The stars were just peeping out on the field of the summer sky, but her eyes saw them not. The glare of the fires within had obscured them all. Yet the breath of the night breeze drew pleasantly upon her cheeks and forehead, and refreshed her.

That night they took shelter in a barn again. It was no new thing, now, for Milly, and she slept as sweetly as ever in her little bed. Early the next morning they had started upon their journey, Adam being determined to reach the river that afternoon. They broke the welcome bread of charity once more, and managed to secure enough provisions to carry them through the

day, let the heat of midday overtake them where it would.

They lunched at noon in a little grove that capped a knoll by a creek, and relished it as much as any of the many frugal meals they had yet taken. Water at the spring they drank by getting on their knees and half immersing their faces in it; and it certainly refreshed them. Just at night again they had come to the river of which the woman in the low red house had told them. It was very wide, and many vessels were to be seen drifting on its bosom. The sight of it astonished Milly, who was prepared for no sight on so large and grand a scale.

Adam tarried about the place until eight o'clock, learning that at that time the boats would come up. He had an undefined purpose in his mind of boarding the first one that landed, and going where it might carry him. He had no money; but he had gone so far through the world without money, and he did not see why he was to be stopped now.

At the exact time the leviathan steamer came up, riding like a world in itself straight to the dock. Adam and Milly were among the first to go aboard, she holding on by his hand. He led her to a seat among some boxes, and told her to sit perfectly quiet till he came back to her again; and went ashore. The thoughts of a demented man must have been his, for he had no errand on shore save the gratification only of his childish curiosity. He wanted to see all, to hear all, and to be every where at the same moment. While he was straggling about, and was being pushed this way and that in the crowd, he looked up at the stately steamer to admire the manner in which she was pictured against the dark sky. He saw that she was in motion!

He gave a yell and a shriek, hurrying to find the plank by which he had come down. It was too late. It was taken in. The boat was ten yards from the quay already. Adam was dumb with fear and his bewildering sensations.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### A QUIET NOOK.

It was just about sunset when a wagon drove up through the ancient avenue to Dovecote, containing a lady and a little girl. The day had been extremely warm, and the laborers had just returned weary from the fields, their waistcoats dangling from their arms. Some of the younger ones ran out before the house, to see what the new arrival was to be; and at once there rose a childish shout, which was rapidly passed from mouth to mouth, telegraphically announcing that Miss Nancy had come. And as she came nearer, we could see that she had a little girl on the seat beside her.

The child was Milly.

Miss Nancy was not exactly a relative of ours, but had long had *carte blanche* of our parents to make the place her home while it might be agreeable to her; all this in consideration, firstly, of her being an old school-mate and friend of my mother's, and, secondly, of her having one of the sweetest natures any where discoverable. Her real name was Miss Nancy Gregory; and she was now returning from her annual visit to some of her old friends in the metropolis. As she was helped to the ground, she first exclaimed, —

"How good this soft turf feels again to the feet!" and a moment afterwards, —

"You see I've brought home a little visitor."

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### A QUIET NOOK.

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We all looked in astonishment, the younger ones especially.

"Come, Milly," said Miss Nancy, offering to take her from the wagon.

"What is her name?" asked my mother.

"Milly — a *pretty* name, isn't it?"

"A *very* pretty name," said my aunt; "and a very pretty girl, I should think, too. Bring her in!"

Miss Nancy went into the house, leading the little stranger by the hand, the rest of us following close behind, and staring.

"I picked up a little friend on my way home," said Miss Nancy, "and thought she might come along with me. She appeared to be lost and friendless; and so I befriended her. She appears to be a very sweet child. You will like her, I know," said she to my mother, "if you allow her to stay."

"But how did you find her?" inquired my mother. "Where did so little a thing happen to come in your way?"

"I picked her up on the boat, on my way up the river. It was just at night."

"On the boat! and *alone*!" exclaimed my mother, in great astonishment.

"Yes; I found her wandering about the cabin, crying as if her heart would break. I took her by the hand, and asked her what was the matter. She said she had got lost. 'But where are your friends?' I asked. She said that she hadn't any living. Her mother was dead; she had no father; and she had lost her way. I pitied her, and asked her if she would go home with me, and told her all about the place where I lived. She manifested the greatest joy immediately, and clung to me as if she had always known me."

"Poor thing!" murmured both my mother and aunt together. "Poor thing!"

"I placed her in a berth next my own for that night, and awoke in the morning to find her much improved in spirits. I got her ready to leave the boat as soon as she landed, and, soon after our early breakfast, took her with me into the stage for pleasant old Dovecote, in pleasant Kirkwood. Quite a little adventure, isn't it?"

It was agreed that it was really what Miss Nancy was pleased to call it. This adoption of a little stranger like Milly into our home nest was an event in our childish lives. She came among us like a vision. We had been least thinking of such an occurrence; and so it took us all the more with surprise.

For a long time my mother and Miss Nancy sat by themselves talking over the matter, in the course of which conversation all the secrets that Milly had hitherto given up respecting her former life were confided to my mother, to be kept sacredly for the child. They seemed to belong to her as much as her clothing; and so little was told us, at the time, of the history of the little unfortunate who had finally had the good fortune to drift into a nook as quiet as ours.

While Miss Nancy and my mother were so deeply engaged in their talk, and my aunt was busy with her preparations for supper, such as baking her hot biscuit, and getting out the honey, and pouring out the milk for those of us who loved it, we children were intently occupied with Milly. The girls had carried her out the door, and asked her name several times apiece, each time telling her they thought it a very pretty name, and had shown her all the flower beds, and named every variety of the simple flowers, and danced her up and down the walks, and made her jump on the green turf

to feel how soft it was, and brought her round to the door again. It was a great novelty; and we all meant to enjoy it as long as it lasted.

Milly said but little, only admiring the trees, and the grass, and the flowers in her own quiet way, her eyes not yet quite dry, it seemed to us, from her recent tears, and the smiles upon her face best speaking the gratefulness of her heart.

"O, I *hope* you're going to stay here! I *hope* you'll live with us!" said one of us.

"Mother'll never let you go away now," added another.

"Where would you go to, if you went?" pursued a third.

"No, Miss Nancy will keep you," said a fourth. "Miss Nancy brought you here, and you are her girl."

"We will have such good times together!" said Nelly. "We can go into the woods and get the flowers where they grow wild, and run in the meadows when the boys go fishing in the little river, and go to school together, and to meeting, and have *such* good times! I *know* you'll stay, won't you?"

"Yes," added another; "say you will. We'll have such *famous* times here now!"

"I should love to," said Milly. "But perhaps——"

"O, there ain't any 'perhaps' about it! No such thing!"

"No, no; you must stay!"

"Can you be contented here? Shan't you want to go and see your old friends?" asked Nell.

"I haven't any friends now," answered Milly.

"No mother, either?"

She shook her head mournfully.

We all looked at her in deepest pity. Her brief

narrative, conveyed in a question and an answer, touched our sympathies till they infolded her deeply in their impulsive embrace. We loved the child much for what she appeared to be; but we loved her for sympathy with her sorrows more.

Supper was soon announced, and we were all called in. As we ranged ourselves around the table, Miss Nancy spoke to my grandfather and grandmother of Milly, telling them in few words who she was, and how she had fallen in with her. Both the old people spoke to her in their kindest way, my grandfather shaking her hand gently, and my grandmother embracing and kissing her. She then went round and took her seat by the side of Miss Nancy; while the rest of us stared at her with all the eyes we had, some wondering at her beauty, some admiring her simple manners, and all hedging her closely about with their sympathies. The evening meal was finished in quietness, every one talking, and laughing, and full of the best of spirits.

After supper, there was the usual summer evening circle around the room, and the usual gathering of the younger ones near the door; and as the shadows of evening closed about us, my grandfather offered the fervent prayer, kneeling with uplifted right hand, and we all said "Good night," and separated. Milly was introduced among us as the special friend and companion of Miss Nancy; and with her she retired for the night, each one eagerly looking forward to the morning again.

The morning came; and Milly came with it, more charming to us than ever. She had that same pleasant expression on her countenance, and the same sweet and simple manners, that had at first won all our hearts. She accosted us gracefully,—*very* gracefully for so

young a child,—and responded to our childish hopes that we should be able to have many a "good time" before the day was over.

I wondered how the breakfast table must look to her, spread with its clean, white cloth, and covered with its yellow butter almost fresh from the churn, its white and brown bread, its capacious bowls of milk for the younger ones who chose them, its ham, cut in such round and tempting slices, and its eggs, and the savory steam of the coffee rising above all, a sort of incense from that domestic board. I watched the perceptible glow and sparkle of her eyes, as, rising in the freshness of the morning, she was greeted with a sight so welcome. It gave me quite as much joy as any other sight could possibly have given her.

That day was a day of pleasure. It seemed to us all a holiday. There was no rest for the soles of our feet from early morning to nightfall. We felt it incumbent on us, as new entertainers of so choice a guest, to see to it that nothing worth seeing be overlooked by her, in the rounds we made with such persevering earnestness. She was taken over the corn crib, and the barns, and the sheds; and shown into the mysteries of the pens, and stalls, and coops; and carried to inspect the ledges whereon the girls loved to build their playhouses, using broken bits of crockery for household wares, and fencing off their several domains with small cobble stones; and made to express her astonishment at the great fields of corn that were waving in all their verdure within view; and at the meadows sloping away from the hillsides for acres and acres; and at the cattle that were quietly grazing over them, dotting the land picturesquely; and at the number of roofs that combined to make us so famous a homestead, offering to the

eye the appearance of a compact settlement of many families.

In short, we tired her out; and so we did ourselves. When we got through at night, we were glad enough to crawl off to bed with as few complaints as possible, trusting to the slumbers of the night to refresh us for the day that was to come.

It was hardly so bad the next day, for the novelty of the thing had in a degree subsided. There was less walking, and, perhaps, more talking. We began to turn the subject over a little, to look at it on all sides. Milly had not so much to see nor to wonder at; she had only to find her way into our youthful affections. And this was an easy task for her, for the road was a smooth and open one.

The days at length began to flow on like the smooth run of a river. There were pleasant banks on either side of them, and many flowers; and the limbs of the trees draped the surface of the stream, and just broke the smooth glassiness of the mirror.

The old homestead grew dearer to the little stranger all the time. She had her own room, near that of Miss Nancy, and there her young domestic feelings seemed to centre. She was up betimes in the morning, and opened her window before some of us had opened even our eyes. Her face was early in a glow, and she breathed the incense of the earliest breezes. She romped up and down the walks with us a little while before breakfast, to whet her appetite, and her eyes glistened with the delight every new day afforded her.

The haying season came and went, during which she accompanied us on our errands to and from the fields, and helped us carry drink and luncheon to the workmen in the meadows, and tossed about the grass in the

forenoon sun to dry, and tried to help rake the fragrant piles at night. That was all new to her. Its influences on her heart were deep, and the impressions of the time were such as could never be effaced. The haymaking scenes must have been rare pictures, I ween, in the cabinet of her memory—the men and the children tumbling in the heaps, pitching and tossing it up from the little conical stacks to the carts, and slowly following the winding wains home again from the long and weary day's labor.

And afterwards the fruits began to ripen,—peaches, and plums, and raspberries,—and there were so many curiosities for her in the garden besides, when the vines began their generous yield, and the beet tops began to show their long, red ears, and the bean pods to cluster about the poles, ready for the baskets and pans that were not vainly held under them. Amidst this little domestic confusion she was quite at home, and appeared to enjoy it thoroughly. She assimilated to all there was around her with great readiness, and became part and parcel of us and our domestic fortunes almost from the first day after her unexpected arrival.

With the servants she soon became a general favorite, more especially with a man servant named David, and a woman named Abigail. David would hold her on his knee, whenever the opportunity favored, and engross her attention with stories about the old times, all of them exceedingly improbable at best, but still well calculated to filagree the fancies of such a child as she. Old chimney-corner stories were such, smoked with the fires that had burned these many years, and savory with the memories of former days and generations.

The summer passed away more rapidly to us than ever, now that we had an accession to our number.

And, the long days of autumn drew on, casting their pleasant shadows over our future, and awakening afresh in us the expectant delights of the season. The mornings now began to be cooler, and the evenings grew damp; it was only during the day that it was pleasant to lose one's self rambling about the homestead, whether in the garden and the yards, or over in the meadows and the woods.

The air was invigorating, yet genial in the extreme. It had not the balminess and freshness of spring, but was much more tempered, and soft, and agreeable. The distant hillsides began to wear their livery of blue haze, and the trees to put on their gorgeous colors. Such were sights that Milly in her life had never seen; and they afforded her, and the rest of us through her, new delight every day.

It was now but one continued round of pleasure and happiness. Milly was adopted into our new home, and already had made herself tenderly beloved of us all.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ON THE UPLANDS.

"When the maple boughs are crimson,  
And the hickory shines like gold,  
And the noons are sultry hot,  
And the nights are frosty cold; —

THAT was the time, of all others, when we loved to thread the woods and roam the uplands — the autumn time; the season dear to our hearts, fullest of bright fancies, and most crowded with beautiful pictures.

It all comes back to me, now, with its rich memories. They are broken, like the bits of a shattered mirror, but each fragment holds a picture.

There are the cattle paths, leading back across the pastures from the shed until their brown tracks lose themselves in the woods that come down from the hills to receive them. There are the lichen-spotted walls, running their lines of boundary across the fields, in whose angles crowd armies of nettle weeds, and from whose rolling stones dangle briery vines, now turned a ruddy red.

There stand the trees on the sides of the hills, among whose boughs are flashing the colors of the autumn, and within whose shade are nestling spots of the yellowest and most golden sunshine. The rocks, moss-mantled, — the narrow passes and miniature gorges through which we climbed upward, — the bubbling springs by the way, gushing out their crystal at our

feet and spreading off over the lowlands,—all these come back again.

The crows are flying and wheeling overhead, sending their croaking "caws" dismally through the solitudes. Sometimes they light on the crests of the tallest chestnuts, where they look, as I catch sight of them across the field of gold, like dastardly pirates, painted all over black, that are cruising about overhead for some exposed craft weaker than themselves. They foretell winter; and I hear the chill winds in their dismal "caws."

Flocks of plump redbreasts flutter away over the ledges, where the purple and dark chokeberries dangle in necklaces from their stems, and the rank sedges wave from gaping gashes in the rocks. I can hear the silken rustle of their wings, as they go by; but not a note of joy have they for the season that is coming. Perchance I shall make the acquaintance of some of this same flock before the snows shall have melted and sunk into the pasture lands again.

The sky is clear and dreamy. It is not patches of blue, it is *all* blue—deep, distant, and boundless. Strange feelings crowd to the heart, and great thoughts throng the brain, as one looks up into the silent expanse—feelings that must gush out in a torrent if they come at all, and thoughts that will never run "trippingly on the tongue" in expression.

As we crumple the few dried leaves beneath our feet, now helping Nelly, and now little Alice, over the rough surfaces,—shouting encouragement to others some of the time, and some of the time feeling it all we can do to encourage ourselves,—the gray woods ring with the glad voices, as if they were peopled with living echoes.

We come to grape vines that have clambered to the tops of some of the tallest trees, twisting themselves tightly about branch and stem; and, looking up, behold leafy festoons overhead, into which plump bunches of grapes, ready to burst their swelling skins, have let themselves down, half hidden in their purpling clusters among the tinted leaves. It looks like a vast basket work in the air, filled with pulpy fruit, and ornamented most fancifully with skilfully-dyed leaves.

We see squirrels on our right hand and on our left; and if on our right hand, we say it is a sure harbinger of good luck. Their cheeks are crammed full with nuts, or with the yellow corn they have been provident enough to harvest from the neighboring field in the valley. They flourish their bushy tails on their way, like a dandy making boast of the outside growth of his head. Away among the boughs, down one trunk and up another, across the backs of branching limbs, up among the mottled masses of the leaves, now lost in a patch of gold and now in a patch of crimson, frisking, chattering, and jumping, they make their swift journeys to their winter dens. And they tell me more feelingly of the coming season than all the rest.

Alice cries because she cannot climb among the jagged stones, and wants to be helped across the beds of the brooks.

We all run to her, and she is borne triumphantly over all difficulties, no one knows how.

"I was afraid!" said she, whimperingly.

And then we laugh loudly at her for her fears, and strut stoutly about in a strip of sunshine, looking like dashing soldiers at the trees, and trying by such means to assure her that *we* are not afraid!

And we all offer at once to take her by the hand, and

tell her that she shall go where the nuts are plenty, and where she need not be afraid. And when we see the big tears sailing about in her eyes, just ready to break away from the lids and roll down her cheeks, our hearts are insensibly touched with a kind sympathy for our little sister, and we can hardly seem to do enough for her, for the moment.

When does the world touch so tender a chord in the heart as this? How often are the sympathies so deeply stirred, and by such trifling causes?

But it has all the semblance of real trouble to us. It is a little episode in our afternoon's ramble; and we meet with few more moving ones as we get bravely on in life.

From the top of the hill we take in large views on all sides of us. Yonder are cornfields, the yellow heads of grain shining like ingots and bars of gold in the sloping sun. Big and round pumpkins, filled to the rind with rich meal, spot the fields thickly, so that they look as if they were auriferous placers. But gold itself is not worth more to the New England husbandman, when the white-headed patriarchs and the prattling youngers gather about his abundant board at the Thanksgiving!

The lawns and the meadows stretch away below us, till their boundaries are lost in the blue haze that lies upon them. The brooks lace them, crossing each other like threads in a skein. The far-off bars and latticed gates dwindle till they look like playthings, opening upon fanciful squares and figures in a clean carpet, all green.

Kine straggle and browse here and there, or stoop to drink at the limpid rivulets; and look up with almost human eyes, while the frisking heifers push each other to and fro with their silver horns, just grown.

The sounds that come up to the height on which we are grouped come softened and subdued. Even the sharp barking of the dog, that has hunted the woodchuck to his hole, sounds musical. The cry of the laborers to their oxen is most welcome to the ear, as we trace the slow teams dragging across the fallow fields.

We romp the afternoon away, and not until the purple piles with the crimson and gold in the west, and the sun's rays slant low across the meadows, do we troop off home again.

The nuts are gathered in baskets, and every basket is full. The older ones carry a double load, relieving the younger, and leading them carefully among the rocks and over the knolls. Alice is so tired she can scarcely tottle, and we all walk slower on her account. She keeps asking "if it's a great way home," and "if it's *much* farther home," and "if we shall see mother again soon." And we keep assuring her the best way we can, telling her how delighted mother will be to see how many nuts she has gathered, and what a time she will have spreading them over the garret floor. And between talking and shouting, and silence and patient plodding, the chimneys of the old home come into view among the trees at last.

Are there any pleasures in after life like these simple pleasures? Are there any affections so warm and so single? Are there any feelings so free from taint and alloy?

Does any one ever find along the highways of the world one of the pure, healthful, happy hours that were strung so thickly along the thread of his youth? Can a single gush of such sweet sympathy well up from the heart again as bubbled up on these soft and halcyon days of childhood? Does ever a soft, low whisper

breathe into the ear that can marshal such feelings at its bidding as the low tone of this little, timid sister?

The touching lines of Hood steal across my memory as I recall these woodland excursions and the strange feelings they begot:—

"I remember, I remember,  
The fir trees dark and high,  
I used to think their slender tops  
Were close against the sky.  
It was a childish ignorance;  
But now 'tis little joy  
To know I'm farther off from heaven  
Than when I was a boy."

There was a new life for us on the uplands in the autumn. We were lifted above the atmosphere we had lived in, and seemed to feel braced by the change. The spirits danced to livelier tunes, and the blood tingled pleasantly in the veins. The nuts fell about our heads like a storm of hail, while we screamed in delight. The squirrels ran busily on all sides. There was a silvery gloss to the scraggy moss that clung to the trees and the rocks, as the sun glinted among its scattered patches.

And the sun itself was so genial! and made us all take to the woods with such eagerness! and lit up the stained arches beneath which we walked with such a bewildering beauty!

I doubt not there are many, many more attractive places to a man in after life than a versicolored wood; but I question if he will come away from any so filled with rich fancies and genial feelings. The spirit of the place is upon him here; and no *genius loci* is so loath to part company with you.

In the woods, and across the sloping and swelling

uplands, you have a vast picture gallery about you. There are landscapes that the pencil of Claude could not copy. There are blent tints in the sky to which Raphael was never equal. Fancies hang in thick clusters among the banner-fringed boughs, and dreams sail softly and insensibly to the brain through the leafy-roofed aisles.

The sun's rays lodge in the branches, piercing the masses of foliage with their golden arrows. Soothing airs draw about the temples, lulling you as to slumber. Quiet thoughts brood every where—thoughts that are themselves full of the deep influences of the place and the time.

A fall day on the uplands is a day all of pleasure. It was ever so to me, and not less even at this time than in the golden cycles of my childhood. Its soothing winds sweep pleasantly through every chamber of my heart. Its generous and genial suns warm gently every impulse of my brain.

The trees; the fruit-clotted vines, holding their trophies proudly and high in the sunshine as they climb the natural trellises of the branches; the dim and distant meadows, seeming to melt in the halo that mantles them; the fields, red with the buckwheat stubble, or golden with the slim-eared maize and the ponderous pumpkins,—all these visions swim again in my brain. Very dear to me are they all. Very rich are they in their memories.

Alas! but they can never live again save in memory!  
Alas for the days that are gone!

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE OLD GARRET.

THERE are FANCIES in a garret?

And why not, pray, in a garret? and even in an old country garret, too?

Though the sun doth not flood the gloomy crannies and angles, and though dangling and ragged webs from spiders' looms swing from one dark beam to another, yet may there be no pleasant fancies brooding there — fancies themselves golden with sunshine, and fringed with a fine web of beauty?

No; it is not in smooth-shaven meadows alone, nor beneath broad-reaching trees, nor beside brawling brooks, that one's better feelings will let themselves out in a genial flow; it is not in the woods only that our inner nature will take airy wings, and revel in speculations and reveries far more real, after all, than the very realities about us; but it is here — it is there — every where — it is even beneath the wormeaten rafters of a dim, dusty, lumber-laden garret!

I have got a little apartment in a corner of one of these thought-prompting garrets — none at all too spacious, to be sure, lighted by but a single window, and walled in on all sides by the weird influences that haunt the place. To this cosy retreat I am accustomed to betake myself when I would indulge in that soothing siesta of the senses — a revery.

Here are no interruptions; nothing to throw its

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shadow between conception and enjoyment. Of a warm summer day I open the door, and suffer the cool wind to draw through the room from the window. Sometimes, on entering, it catches hold rudely by the corners of my manuscript leaves, whirls them uncereemoniously to the floor, performs a pirouette, and then whisks gayly out at the door. There it dances away at its own elfish pleasure in the spacious garret, piping for itself low music, and kicking up with its airy feet the dust of venerable years.

When the sunlight blazes upon the crisped shingles it seems to me that it is night, and that I behold innumerable stars where the light streams through the hundred holes in the roof. The effect is singular enough. And I go groping about in the darkness and the dust, crouching beneath huge beams, crawling carefully into dim archways and quaint angles, ransacking the lumber of years' accumulation, and raising clouds of dust, which the slender lines of sunlight through the roof fashion into shining threads of gold.

All the influences here at times are sombre; yet they are not so sad as to depress me. I have a strange feeling of being momentarily out of the world. I do not feel lost — only isolated. Neither have I a thought of being utterly lonely; for olden associations come thronging strangely to my heart, so that I may readily imagine myself surrounded with beings of life and thought.

As I wander and grope about in this spacious garret, I lose myself in the varied play of my feelings. My eyes fall on old bits of trumpery that were vastly counted on fifty years ago. Here are children's playthings, worn, faded, and broken — the bawbles and hobby horses that absorbed minds now impressing

themselves upon the world. Here — still clasping an oaken beam — are the ends of the rope by which children swung themselves full a half century ago; and the whole dusky beam seems circled round and round with rings of childish laughter. Here are dark corners, and cosy angles, and curious spaces, where each erected spacious playhouses, that might, in mimicry, have rivalled the establishments of the jealous Montagues and Capulets.

And I pick out from the rubbish, or take down from the edges of beams and rafters, remnants of ancient china sets, with their quaint devices shattered into other and odder ones — all of them faithful souvenirs of the days and the habits of our godly grandmothers. And hidden away in the dusty lumber are a few old and badly-bedimmed portraits, coarsely enough done, but once, probably, objects of secret pride and gratification to their owners.

And thus, standing in the midst of this museum of time, I perceptibly feel the influence of the deep silence and the dim light; and I say to my beating heart, Why should *not* a garret be the place, of all others, fullest of living fancies?

De Maistre wrote a volume that was filled with only the records of a journey about his chamber; in good hands, quite as much might be done for an old garret.

This garret I am now in carries me back again to the old one. There were two broad and large windows at either end, through which came all the light by which we played. There were stout swings depending from the heavy crossbeams, where we each of us took our turn at swinging; and it was always a matter of ambition with us to be able to touch the roof itself, in our flights, with the tips of our feet.

The girls — ever seeking some more quiet mode of enjoyment — made wonderful little playhouses in the corners, partitioning off their separate domains by the massive oaken joists that ribbed the whole structure of Dovecote. They set tables, and made ceremonious visits, and “passed the afternoon,” and went through with all the formulas of mature tea-drinking. Even then the germ of maternity was alive in their hearts. No real mothers could in any wise be older than they.

Of a rainy day in summer, if we could but get leave to play in the garret, we were happy. No desire was stronger at such times than this. We trooped off through the back passages, little Alice always behind, and welcomed the privilege as we went with shouts of gladness. There was one to claim one thing, as soon as we reached the head of the garret stairs, and another to claim another; and we were very sure to hear the voice of our aunt, or our mother, close after us, checking the boisterousness of our childish mirth, and never forgetting to warn the older ones to look carefully after little Alice.

There was a large trap door, moving on hinges, that we shut down after us upon the stairs, and thus a larger space was left us for our romping. It was our habit to make all the room we could, and to use quite the whole of it afterwards.

There were old barrels, stowed full of newspapers, and I know not what beside, under the eaves; and big paper parcels of my aunt's savory herbs, for healing drinks; and an old side-saddle, — I remember it well, — upon which we took turns in imaginary rides through all parts of the thereabout country; and odd legs of brass tongs, bereaved forever of their mates, the shovels; and a few curious old-fashioned coats, that we de-

lighted to slip over us, to make the younger ones laugh; and the wreck of a once busy spinning wheel, silenced forever from its droning hum.

And when we ran far under the eaves, essaying to bring back the strangest and the quaintest articles imaginable from our forbidden forays, I remember well the queer trumpery that used to be drawn forth from its lengthened slumbers. Bits of mechanism, accounted truly wonderful in their day; fragments of garments that had got thus stowed away by some process unknown to any body; baskets, and boots, and books, and papers,—they were all to be found as individual ingredients in the strange mixture.

How we loved to listen to the sound of the rain on the roof! Even for hearts as untutored as ours it had a magnetism in its influence. How we stopped in the midst of our sports, when it came in stronger gusts upon the shingles, and fell dripping back into the eaves and gutters! What an indescribable feeling had we of being hemmed in the closer from the world, so that our young hearts grew suddenly warmer and larger towards each other in their sympathies!

Some sat at the dusty and cobwebbed windows, lost in the reading of "poor Robinson Crusoe;" or touched with the tenderness of the sweet tale of Bernard St. Pierre; or wrapped in the interest that hung about the Tales of a Grandfather; or even firing their imaginations with the glowing pictures that abound in the Arabian Nights—books that we had smuggled up with us from time to time from below, and which we kept hidden away, to be read in the mystic atmosphere and by the dreamy light of the old garret. Ah, blessed—blessed be books and their authors! thrice blessed, when they can take deep hold of the child heart, and mould it all as they will!

We talked with each other of the men and women of whom we read; wondering greatly if they could be real characters, and whether they could have felt all for which the good old authors made them accountable. We kept swinging and kept talking. We walked away into farther recesses, still painting over again the scenes that had so warmed and illumined our imaginations.

Not unfrequently, too, some of us personated the characters that had so engrossed us in the stories we read; and this seemed to be especially the case in the matter of Robinson Crusoe. One would act out the famous solitary himself, walking thoughtfully on the beach formed by a single oaken board; while another played the character of his man Friday, making all sorts of supplicant gesticulations to him, as he feared from the same fatal weapon by which his cruel captors had fallen. We built grottoes, and constructed caves, and kept kittens for goats, when we could get them, and fairly picketed in our rude castle, as if fortifying it against a regular siege. I know not what the element is, in childish character, but it is certain that children love to play at nothing so much as solitude. It might be better for many of us, if we made somewhat of a serious play of it as we get on.

What food is there for the heart in country garrets, crowded to the roof with their memories, just as they are stowed so thickly with the rubbish of rusty years! How softly fall the influences of the place upon the thought, soothing its quick pulses, and gently holding the feelings in their silken leash! How sacred are all the associations that sleep in the dust of their angles and recesses, knitting together again days far apart, and weaving in their subtle looms cloths on which are wrought the pictures of many and many a lifetime!

## CHAPTER XX.

### NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

AFTER dinner, on one of the very pleasantest of those pleasant autumn days, Milly put on her little hood and shawl for a stroll by herself about the garden. Unconsciously she wandered along through the garden into the meadow, and kept walking on, she knew not how far, until she found herself stopped by a high rail fence that exactly crossed her path. As she looked up to measure the formidableness of its height, her eyes were greeted by the sight of a girl, somewhat older and larger than herself, sitting on the top rail! She drew back in astonishment.

For at least two or three minutes the two girls deliberately surveyed each other, neither of them offering a word.

At last the one that kept watch on the rail fence ventured to acknowledge the presence of Milly, by asking, "Who *are* you?"

"My name is Milly," said the other.

"Milly? Where did you come from?"

"From Dovecote," answered Milly. "Over there." And she pointed to the distant roofs and chimneys.

"But you don't belong there," persisted the stranger.

"Yes."

"Not *always* belonged there?" said she. "I never see you there."

"No, not but a little while."

"Where did you come from?"

Milly evaded a direct answer.

"Are you going to *live* there?" persisted her interrogator.

"Yes, I hope so," answered Milly.

"Are the folks there your relations, then?"

"No."

"Then how did you know 'em before you come? How did you find the *way* there?"

"I didn't come alone; I came with Miss Nancy."

"Is *she* a relation, then?"

"Not as I know," said the child.

"That's odd, now! What a queer little thing you be! Where be you going *now*?"

"Any where—nowhere."

"You *are* as cur'ous a little body as I've seen this good while. I was thinking I'd go down to Dovecote myself; but I guess I won't, now. I'll stay here and keep *you* company."

"I don't want to stay *here*," said Milly.

"Where then?"

"I want to walk about, to see the trees and all the beautiful things round here."

"Didn't you never live in the country before?" asked the stranger.

"Not like *this*, I didn't," answered Milly.

"What kind of a country was it, then?"

"Not half so pleasant as this. I never saw any thing so pleasant before as it is here."

"Dovecote *is* a pleasant place, and every body says so. I love to come down here myself; but it's only once in a while. I don't come often. 'Tain't likely they want to see such as me round here much."

"Why not?" asked Milly.

"O, because," she replied.

"Because *what*?" persisted Milly.

"O, because I ain't like the children there. I'm an *odd* one!"

Milly looked at her for an explanation.

"Don't you know what that means? You look at me as if you didn't."

"No," said the child.

"Well, I'll tell you. It's to be different from every body else round you. It's to be alone all the time, and to keep your thoughts all to yourself, and to cry by yourself, and laugh by yourself. I'll tell you what it is, Milly; it's to be *miserable*! I hope *you* never'll be an odd one."

The girl had touched the little wanderer's sympathies. She looked the pity she could not express, but only feel.

"But where *do* you stay, if you don't come here often?" asked Milly, picking in pieces a late flower she had plucked from near her feet. "Where do you live?"

"Up in the woods."

"In the woods?" exclaimed Milly.

"Yes; why not?"

"What, *sleep* in the woods?"

"Certain."

"And *live* in the woods?"

"Certain; didn't you never hear of such a thing as that before?"

"No," said Milly; and it is to be questioned if, graduate of the poorhouse that she was, she ever *had* heard of a life that seemed to her so wild and strange.

"Then you'd like to see where I live, I know," said the girl. "Would you?"

"I don't know," said Milly.

"Why, I should think you'd know whether you'd like it or not. Why shouldn't you?"

"I'm afraid."

"Afraid! Poh! Why ain't *I* afraid, then? I've lived there so long, too."

"I should think you would be," said Milly.

"Well, but I ain't! And now, if *you* could but see the place, I know you'd like it, too. Why not? It's as pleasant as Dovecote is, in its way."

Milly stood and pondered upon it.

"Let's go up there now," offered the girl.

"Where is it?" asked Milly, looking up into her face.

"Up yonder," said she; "up the mountain."

She pointed in the direction it would be necessary for them to take.

"It's not a long walk," urged she, "and I'll come back with you again. I'll bring you back to this very spot."

"Who's up there?" asked Milly.

"Nobody lives there but my grandfather and me," said the girl, "and he ain't to home now; he's gone a-fishing. He won't be back, 'tain't likely, till night. Come!"

Milly needed no more pressing, but immediately started off with her newly-found companion. They climbed the fence, and went rambling across the pastures, and up over the sloping hillsides, until they were finally lost from view. The girl took her on by circuitous paths, where her feet had never trod before, and through tangled underwood, and around huge rocks that seemed to have rolled from their places, and finally began to climb the steep acclivity that went by the name, thereabout, of "the mountain."

All the way they continued their desultory and childish conversation, each of them putting the other as many questions as entered her head, and offering such queer opinions and speculations as swim only in the brains of children.

"You've told me *your* name," said the stranger girl, "and now I'll tell you *mine*. It's Daisy; and I live with my grandfather, and nobody else. We live all alone up here; and it's pretty lonesome, too, sometimes."

Milly told her that she thought it must be.

"Yes," said Daisy; "but then they tell me it's lonesome every where, at times. It's jest as a body happens to feel, you know. Now, up here I can enjoy myself as much in the woods round the door as other folks do in their gardens. It's all the same to me as if I was right in the midst o' folks. I'm jest as happy. I look up to the sky, and see jest the same clouds other folks see; and I look off, and see the very same village that people live in; and it looks all the pleasanter, you know, for the distance. I love the woods, too, and the flowers, and the rocks, and the vines, and the grass."

"But I should think you'd want your mother to live with you," said Milly.

"I haven't got no mother," answered Daisy. "I wish I had."

There was a thoughtful pause, during which these two young hearts beat in deep sympathy together. Each of them motherless! how well worthy of pity, both of them!

"My grandfather," Daisy went on, "is all the relation I've got—all the *friend* I've got; and he ain't with me much of the time. He's off fishing or hunting generally. That's the way he lives, only when he's to

home, in the rainy days and the winter days, to make baskets."

"What's his name?" asked Milly.

"Every body calls him Jarvie; Jarvie Thatch is his whole name; and I'm his only relation."

"Do you like to stay up here so much alone?"

"I love my grandfather," said the girl. "I couldn't leave *him* to live any where. Would *you*?"

"I should want him to live somewhere else," said Milly.

"Perhaps you won't say so," replied Daisy, "when you come to see what a pleasant spot our hut's in. Besides, he's so good to me! he does every thing for me."

"Then he ought to let you live nearer people."

"But I tell him I am happy up here. I don't *want* to live any where else. I've got use' to this place; and I couldn't go away now, I don't think."

"Shouldn't you like to live at Dovecote?" asked Milly.

The question staggered her. She was at a loss how to answer.

And in this way they talked while they walked, gleaning items of intelligence from each other in the very natural way of question and answer, steadily climbing the ascent, and winding upwards by the devious paths, until they at last reached the edge of a little clearing. As the spot broke on their sight, Daisy went forward of her companion quickly, and, holding out both hands, exclaimed,—

"*This* is where I live! There's the hut, yonder!"

And with the words, they emerged upon the little opening.

The place seemed to be a naturally-constructed shelf,

or fragment of table land, set snugly into the side of the mountain. Hemlock and spruce threw down their dark shadows upon the ground, and old logs, the trunks of fallen trees, lay stretched across each other, to decay in the storms and sunshine. There was a fair growth of coarse grass upon the plain, sufficiently thick to form a carpet for the feet of the recluse inmates of the hut, and dotted here and there with a clump of dwarfed savin and juniper. There was not the least appearance of a spirit of thrift, or any thing that resembled it. All was as wild as the felling of the trees and the erection of a hut had left it.

The latter was somewhat of a curiosity. It was built against the shoulder of a square fragment of ledge, that seemed made there expressly for its convenience, with one window, and a low, wide door exactly in the middle. The structure was almost wholly composed of rude logs, dovetailed together at the two front corners, and closed up at the narrow interstices with streaks and patches of mud. The roof was hurriedly put together; and where the boards came from, few as they were, was altogether a mystery. It was but a step from the sill to the hard ground, with nothing like a doorstone beneath. A multitude of dried bushes—savin, and hemlock, and white oak boughs—were strewed about at the sides and on the top of the hut, probably having done their little service towards keeping off the biting winds of the last winter.

From the spot there was a beautiful view, indeed, as Daisy had already hinted to her young companion. In the distance was the pleasant little village of Kirkwood, with its row of white houses, half hidden by maples, and sycamores, and elms; and its slender church spire, pointing straight to heaven, as if it would say there

was but one path there; and its village of graves, the ground dotted thickly with white and brown headstones. As the eye drew its vision nearer the mountain, all the pleasant domain of Dovecote stretched out before it, forming a complete cabinet picture by itself; while at the foot slept a sullen, gloomy-looking mass of forest, the ambitious chestnuts aspiring far above the rest of the dense growth, and all the mass stained and blotched, at this season, with colors that were enough to bewilder the brain. Milly did not stop long there to look on this grand picture, for her companion hurried her along, inviting her to enter the hut.

The door was already wide open. No need of locks and bolts on a structure so frail as the hut of old Jarvie Thatch; and little was there, either, that the most vicious thief would have felt disposed to steal.

They went in; and Daisy seated her friend in an old chair that had been newly bottomed by her grandfather with clean strips of ash. Milly looked inquisitively about the apartment. It was almost as rude within as without. The floor was partly of oak and partly of chestnut, with gaping chinks and seams between the planks, and not so much as a narrow strip of carpet to cover one of them. There was a fireplace in the rude stone chimney, and a large flat stone had been laid for the hearth. In the corner was a bed, on which old Jarvie slept. In an opposite corner, screened partly from sight by the ragged drapery of an ancient bedquilt, was the cot where Daisy slept. There was an old, faded, red chest standing against the wall, and next it a plain table of pine; and on the table lay a large book—a Bible. A few chairs, made by the ingenuity of Jarvie himself, completed the list of the furniture. A black cat lay snuggled up before the hearth, who stared

at Milly when she entered, and, seeing all was right, curled herself up and grew drowsy again.

A shadow fell across the door, and a man entered. It was Jarvie! Milly looked at him half in affright. He wore a slouched felt hat, and carried a small string of some kind of fish in his left hand. His eyes were wild in their expression, and pierced Milly as if they would pierce her through. He had suffered his beard to grow rather long, which, with his ragged jacket and pantaloons, and hardworn shoes, and slouched hat, and wiry frame, made him look enough, thought Milly, to frighten any one. The cat instantly roused herself on hearing his step, and at once began rubbing herself backwards and forwards against his leg.

He threw down his fish on a little bench near the fireplace, and listened attentively to Daisy while she narrated the brief history of her acquaintance with Milly, and their mutual experience up the mountain. He did not put the child many questions, but his eyes dwelt so fixedly on her face, and with such a strange glare, — betraying both thoughtfulness and curiosity, — that she felt as if she would rather be any where else than there; and in a short time she did go, escorted down the mountain again by Daisy, according to promise.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### MR. BRIMMER'S BEE.

SLOWLY the reddening suns of autumn went southward, and the white frosts came creeping on, and the leaves fell whirling here and there from the trees. The days grew shorter, and concentrated all their feeble warmth into the noons. The school "let out" earlier, that the children might be home seasonably; and the tea table was laid at an hour just between the short twilight and the dark.

And autumn slipped away altogether. The very last day was gone. December came in howling and blustering, as if it were about to carry the town by storm. But many of the old people had seen winters before; and they only piled up larger fires, and wrapped themselves in more comfortable clothing, and raised their spirits correspondingly, and stood their ground.

It was a bitter winter, and people all began to admit it before the year turned the corner. When the new year opened the roads were banked with snows, and all hands turned out to "break paths" with ox sleds and huge shovels. There was a universal looking forward to the evening of that day, for it was to be the occasion of a famous reunion at the house of the minister. In short, there was always a "bee" at the minister's every New Year's day.

The good man's name was Mr. Brimmer; and by his kindly offices every where, his faultless walk before all

eyes, his genial and generous sympathies with his humble little flock, he had laid away for himself uncounted treasures in their memory. The good people of Kirkwood rarely did any thing of this kind by halves; and if they liked their minister at all, they loved him; if they made aught of him, they idolized him. So that it may be no subject of wonder, that all the men, women, and children of the village steadily looked out for snow days before the event now expected, and flatted their noses against the window panes early on this New Year's morning, to learn if the weather was, as usual, to be propitious.

People never could have asked for more. It was exactly to their minds.

There were few of the children at Dovecote that were generally allowed to mingle in this festival with their elders; but on this particular occasion Miss Nancy had concluded to take Milly along with her to the minister's, desirous of having her see the many good people that yearly flocked to his help, and of giving her sound views of pleasure, and duty, and affection. Besides this, it would be quite a new sight to the child, and could not fail to inspirit her afresh. So, when the large family party was finally made up at Dovecote, and the great working horses had been hitched to the huge sleigh that went by the name of the "pung," Milly found herself stowed snugly away—she knew not where or how—among cloaks, and coats, and furs, braced by the raw air that found its way to her seclusion, and gliding swiftly along to the jangling music of many rows of bells.

They arrived safely at the parsonage, where the good Mr. Brimmer was ready to receive them in the entry, shaking hands with noticeable cordiality with the old

people, and welcoming the younger in a pleasant way that none understood better than he. The various articles of defence against the cold were piled promiscuously in one family group, and all moved quietly into the room of reception. Few had as yet arrived; and Mr. Brimmer sat talking with my grandparents about the coldness of the present winter, compared with some other winters that they knew something of. The attention of Milly was chiefly taken up with the questions of the minister's wife, who had beguiled her to the window, and was showing her some of the samplers she had wrought in her younger days, which must have been very long ago.

Presently the sleighs began to drive up before the door in good earnest. There was little else but a steady jingle, jingle of bells. The ladies were helped out, and ran immediately into the house, as fast as their bundled condition allowed; and the men drove their horses round to the barn, and soon afterwards joined those they had brought.

Mr. Brimmer was glad to see all. So was Mrs. Brimmer. And it was gratifying to observe the delicate attentions which the very roughest and most thoughtless of the men voluntarily paid my grandparents. Every one had a kind word for them; and the old people appeared to be in their element.

There came the Bradshaws, in a double sleigh drawn by a red horse and a white one, the white one considerably the largest; and then the Featherfews, the old lady and five girls of them, and a ringing set of girls they were, too; and then the Gerrys; and the Applebys; and plain Mr. Olney, the postmaster, with all his stern official dignity, and his wife; and Mrs. Bayberry, with a raw son and a very tall daughter, whom some

were rude enough to liken to a tallow candle with a good deal of *bayberry* in it; and Miss Sparhawk, the old maid, with a very sharp nose and chin and a very acidulous face; and Mrs. Weatherwax, the woman who played the part of the Great Mogul in village gossip, fleshy and imposing, with a face as red as a roasted apple; and afterwards the village doctor, his face much stained with snuff, and a young student of his, named Skypepper, who wore very tight pantaloons of blue, with very long leather straps to keep them down, and brushed his black hair like a steeple over his forehead, and showed his great teeth to their best advantage.

It was a merry party indeed, and quite as curious as it was merry. Yet, for all its seeming incongruities, every one appeared to know exactly his or her own place, and slipped into it with as little fuss as statues are lodged in the niches prepared beforehand for them. The supper was a famous one. Every thing was on the table, and every body was there to help eat it. All brought eatables with them, however, contributing to the common stock. Some only sipped a cup of hot tea; others simply broke a piece of light cake; some of the more earnest eaters laid away comfortable internal supplies of meat, of which various kinds had been furnished cold; brown hands broke browner biscuits, of the size of saucers; and all talked, and laughed, and talked again.

After supper the company adjourned to the next room, where each donated his or her yearly gift to the minister, calling it off with their names. The room was full of gifts and people. One offered a good sack of yellow meal, yellow as gold; another a barrel of flour; another a pair of smoked hams; another a round of beef; and others cake, and pies, and loaves of bread,

white and brown, and garments of various uses and descriptions, and pieces of cloth that would be useful in their time. And last of all, while the company were still crowded in the room where these things mostly were, up before the door came a huge load of wood, drawn by twelve yokes of oxen, each yoke driven by a young man of the town. The sled containing the wood had been made expressly for this occasion, and must have carried eight or ten cords. It was hailed with vociferous cheers and commendations from within; and then the young men drove it round the house into the yard. When they finally entered the room where we were, later in the evening, it may be safely calculated that they received the especial praise and compliments of every body.

Then some of them commenced playing at blind man's buff, a game at which Miss Sparhawk declared no one but a fool *would* play.

"The fools ain't all dead yet!" said Mrs. Weatherwax, bridling, yet looking only at the players.

"No; I *see* they ain't!" retorted Miss Sparhawk, setting her gray, gimlet eyes fixedly upon Mrs. Weatherwax.

These two ladies were the flint and steel of the town. Whenever they came in conflict, fire was pretty sure to follow.

Mr. Skypepper strutted that way.

"Did you *ever*, Mr. Skypepper?" said Miss Sparhawk, languishingly for *her*. "Did you ever see such a foolish game as this?"

"Really, I—I——"

"Did you ever know any one, Mr. Skypepper, that found so much fault with games she couldn't play at herself?" interrupted Mrs. Weatherwax.

Miss Sparhawk threw her an indignant glance. "Why can't I play at so silly a game as blind man's buff, I should like to know?" said she.

"O," returned Mrs. Weatherwax, very dignifiedly, "because you're much *above* it, you know. It's *below* you, Miss Sally." She always called her "Miss Sally" when she wished to be particularly provoking. "That's *one* reason."

"Umph! And what's the other?"

"I rather think, Miss Sally," replied she, "you're a little afraid you won't get your share of the kisses!" And Mrs. Weatherwax laughed with a great explosion.

Mr. Skypepper blushed, as what young man in like circumstances would not? Miss Sparhawk turned red in the face, till her face looked decidedly like a hot stove. There was certainly a good fire beneath.

"Just as if," said she, angrily, "just as if——"

"Yes, just as if, Miss Sally, it wasn't just so, every bit of it!"

"I admire to see people *jealous*, don't *you*, Mr. Skypepper?" said Sally, looking up in his face.

Mr. Skypepper glanced at Mrs. Weatherwax to see if he might venture an opinion secure of attack, and then dropped his eyes to his straps. During the course of this operation, the steeple on his head came tumbling down in ruins about his forehead, making quite another man of him. No one would have taken him for Mr. Skypepper *then*.

Mrs. Bayberry and her "tallow-candle" daughter intruded.

"Why, Mr. Skypepper!" exclaimed she; "is this *you*? I haven't laid eyes on you this long time. Margaret, this is Mr. Skypepper; you remember my Margaret, Mr. Skypepper?"

"O, perfectly," said he, half bowing to the tall young lady.

Miss Sally Sparhawk was eying the unfortunate daughter from head to foot, and so back again. Her attention finally settled upon her face, where she studied every flaw discoverable, and found faults that other eyes had never found before.

Poor Mr. Skypepper! They had him there in durance for a long time. Mrs. Bayberry cordially invited him to her house. Mrs. Weatherwax laid her head back in her chair, and, half laughing, told Miss Sally that her laurel plants needed looking to; at which Miss Sally looked unmuttered thunder at her, and condescended no reply. Between the old maid and the younger one, Mr. Skypepper found himself kept wonderfully busy; and as for Mrs. Weatherwax, she looked on and laughed as long as she could enjoy it as a novelty, and then withdrew, as Mrs. Bayberry had done before her. Mr. Skypepper went home with Miss Sally, however, that evening; but Mrs. Weatherwax always insisted, afterwards, that the young gentleman accepted *her* escort, and not she his!

In other parts of the room, all the romping having long ago been transferred to the spacious kitchen, grouped the postmaster and the doctor, with one of the selectmen and the storekeeper; and two or three ladies sat talking very interestedly with Milly, bringing out her many charming qualities with their rapid questions, and turning to Miss Nancy to apprise her of their exalted opinions of her little *protégée*. Milly, of course, was delighted with the whole scene. The good minister took her on his knee, too, and held her with his talk for some time, most of all pleased with the candid and

truthful answers she made to his questions. He must have paid her more attention, at first, in consideration of her many misfortunes hitherto, of which the outline had already been given him; but after he found for himself how sweet her whole nature was, she became his favorite at once; and both he and Mrs. Brimmer insisted on Miss Nancy's bringing her over to see them as often as she could, and making their visits just as long as agreeable. And it came about, in time, that she staid with the minister's family a great deal—insomuch that the rest of the children at Dovecote grew often weary of her absence, and suffered her departure with much protestation and wretchedness.

This bee of Mr. Brimmer's led to many a happy day for the child. It added to her list of friends, and added some strong and profitable ones. And Milly grew more and more contented in her new life continually.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### BILLY STOKES AND HIS FRIEND.

THE remainder of the winter wore slowly away. During all this time, Milly had not seen her friend Daisy, though old Jarvie came occasionally about the house to dispose of his baskets and herbs. The days were growing warmer and longer, and finally spring itself smiled in the sky, and burst laughingly out of the ground.

Billy Stokes was coming home late one evening,—it was getting to be just about a year since Milly's going away to Byeboro',—whistling his way along down the narrow street where his mother lived, and thinking of nobody so much as her and Milly, when a ragged girl accosted him with extended hand, asking him for charity. It was a new appeal for Billy to hear; and he drew up before her, looking her steadily in the face.

"What!" said he, after she had got across the threshold of her story, "hain't you got any home?"

"No," said the girl. "I'm hungry, too. If you'll only get me a crust—any thing to keep me from stealing!"

"If a crust of bread'll do that," he answered, "then a crust of bread you sh'll have, and a good deal besides. Come along with me!"

The girl walked on by his side, filling his ears with the fragmentary stories of her life and experience, to

which at the time he however gave little heed, but conducted her straight to the door of the house where he lived.

"Now all you've got to do," said he, "is to follow me."

And they tramped along through the dark hall, finally reaching the door of the Stokes's domicile.

"Mother, here!" he called to Mrs. Stokes, still holding on by the door and pointing to the stranger. "This girl says she's hungry; and unless somebody feeds her, she'll steal!"

"Steal?" exclaimed Mrs. Stokes. "Steal?"

"I hope I shan't have to," answered the girl; "but which is hardest—to do that, or starve?"

"There isn't no need o' doin' either," said Mrs. Stokes, setting instantly about getting together the fragments of their dinner and placing them before her.

The light fell in her face: it was that same freckled face. She took off her bonnet: it was that same red hair. The beggar girl was Snarly Moll! No one who had ever seen her could be at a loss to recognize her.

Mrs. Stokes told her kindly to sit up and eat what she wanted, an invitation that needed no repetition.

Moll immediately drew before the table and eat like one nearly famished.

"I never'll turn the poor away from *my* door," said Mrs. Stokes, darning doggedly on the heel of one of Billy's stockings. "I know myself what it is to be poor; and nobody feels that sort o' sympathy for hungry and destitute folks that hungry and destitute folks does themselves. Where did you come from?" she continued.

Snarly Moll had now quite finished her meal. She therefore turned round to her hospitable questioner, and

prepared to make a full and satisfactory answer to the interrogatory.

"From Byeboro'," answered the girl

"Byeboro'!" exclaimed Billy.

"Byeboro'!" added his mother, with still more emphasis.

"Have you been there?" Moll was induced to ask.

"Certain I have," said Mrs. Stokes.

"Know any body there?"

"Know any body there! I guess I know the Trevelyns!"

"Wal, but they're gone now, so they say."

"Gone!" exclaimed Mrs. Stokes again, uplifting both palms.

"Yes; Mr. Trevelyn killed himself——"

"Killed himself?"

"And they broke all up."

"What *can* have become o' Milly?" said Mrs. Stokes. "O, poor Milly! I wish you'd staid here with me. You'd been a sight better off, I know. Killed himself, did you say? Mr. Trevelyn kill himself? I'd never ha' believed it!"

"He's the same man, mother, as shot himself and another man at the hotel here, a good time ago," said Billy. "I remember somethin' about it now. I'd forgot all what his name was; there's so *many* things to remember nowadays. I wonder, mother, where Milly is?"

"Did you know her?" asked Snarly Moll, looking at Billy.

"Know her? I guess I did! She *lived* here once, and I guess I use' to know her some *then*!"

"Did *you* ever know her?" asked Mrs. Stokes, in a very excited way.

"Know her? Yes'm; she lived with *me*, too!"

"Now *do* tell me," said Mrs. Stokes. "And where was that, pray? Is she livin' there yet? If she is, I'll go straight off and bring her back here agin! Where *was* it?"

"'Twas in Byeboro' poorhouse," answered Moll, rather sadly. Born as she was *in* a poorhouse, she yet felt backward in acquainting people with her misfortunes.

"In the poorhouse!" Mrs. Stokes was obliged once more to exclaim. "How came she there?"

"Same's *I* come there," said the girl. "I s'pose she hadn't no better home."

"Poor darlin'! If I'd but known it!"

"I wish you had," said Moll, "for you would ha' seen that she was taken care of. But nobody ain't sure o' that *now*. She's gone agin."

"What *is* all this you're tellin' of me? Gone! *Where's* she gone? Do you know?"

"No'm, I don't. I wish I did. I guess nobody don't know whether she's dead or alive. She slipped off one night, and never's been heard on sence; and 'twan't a *great* while after that 't I come out o' the poorhouse myself, the same way."

"Run away?" asked Billy.

"*Run* away," answered Moll.

Mrs. Stokes sat divided between wonder and grief. She began seriously to reproach herself for having suffered Milly to go out of her hands at all. Her eyes were fixed on Moll, while her thoughts were all along the road by which she imagined the little vagabond must have travelled to reach the city. She was temporarily in a dream; but it was a dream entirely of wonder.

"I wonder where she is," said Billy, evidently trying to get at the heart of the mystery.

"And so do I," added Moll. "She was a little beauty, she was, and every body loved her."

"We all did," said Billy.

"Yes, so we did," added his mother.

"*I* did," continued Moll. "But she's gone now. I hope she's got a good home *somewhere*. She deserved one, if ever any body did."

"Don't you know where the Trevelyn folks be?" asked Mrs. Stokes. "Don't *they* know where she is?"

"After they broke up, I never heerd folks say no more about 'em. They went off; but I never knew where."

"It seems so strange," again exclaimed Mrs. Stokes, slow to get the better of her wonder, "to see any body who's seen Milly; and seen her in the poorhouse, too! Jest to *think* on it!"

They insisted that Snarly Moll should stay with them that night, and after that they thought she might in some way be provided for. The girl took a great liking to the baby, bestowing marked attention upon her—a fact which neither Mrs. Stokes nor Billy were slow to notice, and which might have had not a little influence in determining their feelings finally towards the stranger.

They found some kind of work between them for her to do, after that, and did what was in their power to provide her with a place that she might temporarily call "home." Her story was listened to by them with eagerness, while she earned all their sympathy in the recital of her many misfortunes.

Her manners were quite odd in the eyes of the humble little family of Mrs. Stokes; yet they soon grew

accustomed to them. Her singular devotion to the baby seemed to supply every shortcoming.

"And to think," said the baby's mother to herself, "that that very child was loved jest the same by Milly! Poor little thing! I wonder where you can be now?"

Before spring had far advanced, Snarly Moll came to be quite an essential in the Stokes household. In her way, no one could be smarter than she. She meant to be what people call "smart as a steel trap;" and sometimes Mrs. Stokes was obliged to give her gentle checks, that she might not seem to get on faster than would be for the interest of all.

Billy liked her more and more, and kept on selling his newspaper wares rejoicing.

Yet Milly was the subject of serious thought throughout the little circle. Not a day but they talked of her among themselves with deepest sympathy and feeling.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### A SPRING MORNING.

Down the long lanes, leafy and green,—over the sloping meadows, spread anew with verdure,—into the swelling woods, where luxuriant sprays begin to ramble,—beside laughing water brooks, threading through meadow, furze, and fen,—there go we on this golden morning of spring!

There is a new life in every thing. Earth has taken a new lease of existence.

Breaths that are with fragrance laden  
Beat upon the fevered brow,  
And the pulses leap full wildly  
With the new life in them now.  
Life is in the earth and waters;  
Life jets up in every tree;  
Every thing is leaping upward  
In a life all fresh and free!

The bright sun throws his arrows from a full quiver, and just stops to touch pictures that never human hand can copy. The brooks are brimming, and gems of landscape are swimming in their smiling faces. Where osiers, and sedges, and rushes grow by the water's brink, green-coated frogs are sounding the deep bass or twanging the discordant treble. Lilycups sit floating on the breast of the lake, like stately little palaces of ivory, their bases washed by the reflux wave. In little glens the grass grows of a deeper green, where

hidden rills ooze softly through the dark turf to the river or the pond. Banks of emerald are enamelled with buttercups and daisies; and down in the moist meadows yellow cowslips draw their gaudy scarfs about their shoulders, and sit like coquettes admiring their own charms.

Bees are driving briskly a-field, hunting the thyme and the clover beds, from which they return laden with golden spoils. In the sprays the birds are building and twittering, making their own mortar and finishing their own homes. The swallow, with his steel-blue wings, cleaves the air above the pond and disappears again. Where the willow and the hazel hang low over the water, little round nests are growing for the callow young.

Tribes of gay insects, decked in colors of purple, and crimson, and gold, are skimming upon the surfaces of little coves, whose smooth mirrors the glancing fish break with a leap and a splash; or go sailing, like tiny argosies full freighted with treasure, over the glistening grass and the brilliant beds of flowers.

In the field the oxen are plodding slowly down the freshly-opened furrows, throwing back the thick turf, and turning up the rich black soil to the sun. You can hear the sturdy "gee" and "haw," and catch the echo of the shrill whistle.

Heifers with sprouting horns butt idly near the barn-yard wall, and occasionally stop to snuff the fresh spring odors from the distant pastures. Hither and yon the white lambs are leaping and frisking, their patient dams gazing at them with apparent delight, if not downright astonishment. Stately oxen, turned out for fattening, gaze thoughtfully at you, lifting their frizzled fronts and branching horns. The cows are lowing for their calves

in far-off places; and the sound of their cries mixes pleasantly with the thousand other sounds of this bursting and brilliant morning of spring.

Speckled trout are leaping in the glistening brooks at the venturous flies; and little minnows are scudding in shoals from one spot to another, or playing in the shadows just under the edge of the old rustic bridge. The big, round wheel at the mill is plunging, and dashing, and dipping into the frothy water, making the huge stones go round and round that grind the golden grain. Its rumbling echoes roll steadily up through the wooded valley, while from the great wheel itself drip rows of glistening pearls. The swift milltail runs far out into the foaming river, making eddies, and cross currents, and whirling dimples in the stream.

In the woods squirrels are chattering, whisking their bushy tails as they frisk from tree to tree. There are the old rabbit snares, and there are the quail traps, set so carefully in the autumn before, beneath the tall chestnuts and just at the edges of the buckwheat fields. Straggling cattle are breaking down the tender limbs of the birches with their brawny sides, browsing as they go, and stopping to look at the intruder with a gaze of deep seriousness. The jay is screaming in the tops of the highest trees, and the partridge is just beginning his muffled drum. A glassy fountain swells at your feet, and, overflowing its soft bounds of turf, goes trickling down through the narrow throats of the little gorges, making a low melody like the ringing of silver bells.

The old elms toss high their leafy crests, showering down their dingy blossoms on the roofs and over the yard, as their giant arms sway protectingly in the wind. There are odors, too fragrant to describe, sailing up to your nostrils on the sluggish currents of the breeze from

many a bank of violets and many a sea of lilies. The flowering lilacs at the garden gate load the air about the house with their fragrance; and children are plucking the blossoms in heavy bunches, and sticking them in broken-nosed pitchers for flower pots.

In the house the windows are opened wide, that the breath of the fresh spring morning may draw in. The walls, and the oaken beams, and the ceiling have all been newly whitewashed again, till the rooms smell as sweet as the spring airs in the yard and the garden. Asparagus boughs are stuck in with evergreen at the fireplaces, and carpets have been taken up, that the hard, oaken floors may be regularly washed.

The pinks line the walks in the garden, mingled in with carnations, and crocuses, and narcissuses; and they blush to find themselves looking so gay in the glad morning sunlight. On the currant bushes hang myriad clusters of green fruit yet unformed; and bits of muslin are strewn over some of the branches to bleach and dry.

The fowls are let loose; and they wallow, as if it were a delightful privilege, in the mellow mould. Chickens of the last year's growth lie banked up in the strips of warm sunshine under the fences and walls, their long, yellow legs stretched out lazily behind them in the dirt and sand.

The roses are blowing — some red, some purple, and some a melting of all the tints in the florist's vocabulary. Tulips, like other Ganymedes, stand holding their ruddy goblets to catch the rain and the dew. Honeysuckles are clambering up by loose and decayed boards, and winding themselves affectionately about rails, and posts, and pilasters. Woodbines are thatching low roofs, and hanging their glossy green leaves in dense masses over brown eaves and latticed windows.

There are pale, white blossoms by the million on the plum trees, and ruddy blows in like number on the rough stems of the apple trees. And the bees keep up their busy hum, buzzing in swarms in and out the branches. And the drum of the far-off waterfall chimes in strangely with the sound, lulling the senses to slumber, and lapping the soul in a sweet Elysium.

Every syllable of the poet has a deep truth in it now, as he says, —

“From the hot, angry, crowding courts of doubt  
Within the breast, it is sweet to escape, and soothe  
The soul in looking upon natural beauty.  
O, Earth, like man, her son, is half divine!”

Gushing out with freshness, and beauty, and glory, are all these bright spring days. Like brimming fountains, they swim with sweet pictures. Like babbling brooks, they are full of joy. It seems, indeed, a “bridal of the earth and sky,” then.

It is on these mornings, when the fogs, like fleecy lambs, have been folded from the mountains and the hillsides, that the spirit goes forth to the stirring influences of the hour. The heart is freshened with the morning dew. The soul revels in the round of charming scenes and sounds.

Standing on the hills, the spirits grow elevated at contemplating the many sights that crowd to the eye. There is a quick bound to the pulses, and a brisker beating of the heart. The feelings glow, and the thoughts quicken, and the fancies fire at the sight of the living and breathing landscape. The meadow brook, hurrying from its mountain hiding-place, and winding down in a silver flood through the deep field of emerald, — the long lines of fruit trees, set out

in regular rows, and every row liveried in the bright colors of the season,—the white and brown cottages, squatted in the scooped hollows, and intrenched behind stockades of flowering bushes and fruit-bearing boughs,—the acres of green meadow,—the vast reaches of rolling upland,—the dense masses of darkened wood,—and the checkered patches of ploughed farm land,—all these awake the heart to new life and to fresh ecstasy.

In the alembic of the thoughts, at such a time, there is produced one single thought, more elevated and more spiritual than all the rest. It takes hold, for the moment, upon the whole being, moulding and controlling it. It washes away the dikes of conventional and constrained feeling, and fills the soul with nothing but its own clear wave. That single thought is of God.

The secret influence comes upon you from the very air you take into your nostrils. It flows into your heart on the dancing wavelets of the waterbrooks. It sails into your soul with the bright tints that make such pictures in your eyes. You drink it in unconsciously with the dews that freshen the fragrance of the lilacs, and the roses, and the apple blossoms. It surrounds you like a blessed mantle, as the yellow sunshine wraps you in its genial folds.

The spring morning is a favored time. Then are all God's created things to us most in seeming harmony. Buds and birds, bees and brooks, they have but a common bliss; and the tie that thus holds them is golden. I see the same glory in the dew-besprent grass, and in the lily from which I shake the rain, that shines in the bright cloud that drifts through heaven. I find the same glittering fancies, and the same gushing feelings, in the deep, green hedgerows, and down the leafy lanes,

that weave themselves in the starry vestment of the night, or break their bounds when the great eastern gates are opened, and "jocund day stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops." In each and all there glows a living charm. Pray Heaven your own heart may not be dead to the influences!

Not less than this is the memory of a spring morning at Dovecote. Would that tongue or pen could seize the rich colors that clothe these memories, as they rise again to the heart of him who loves so well to feed upon them all!

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## A DAY AT THE BROOKS.

WHERE twisting brooks, like silver threads, go babbling and braiding through the lowland — where the willow buds start early in the spring, and the maples don their red jackets, and the cowslips dally with the laughing water — where smokes go up from the ground, straggling along through ravines and climbing the bared hillsides — where frogs begin to whirl seasonably, and speckled turtles to poke their slim heads out of the winter's mud — there I betake myself with the first genial days of spring. Not until the heart of winter is broke, and then the time has come.

Later than this in the season, however, the charms of earth seem to be in blossom. There is a profuseness of beauty every where. The airs blow blandly, and cool the fevers of the blood. The voices come in still and melodious circles to the ear. The sounds of life, rising freely on every hand, crowd about the soul with influences never so healthful and happy.

There is a quiet pleasure in following up the brooks on a spring day, different from all other pleasures. It takes you through the grandest and the sweetest scenery. It fills your eyes, your ears, and your heart, till all are surfeited. It opens the sluices of your nature, closed by the frigid conventionalisms of life, and lets the tide of natural influences set freely in.

With a rod across your shoulder, you shall nowhere

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find such simple and such sufficient delight. Threading your difficult way among the close-growing bushes, leaping from stone to stone through the oozing quagmires, fighting your passage against resisting brush and brake, and now rising a little headland, or coming unexpectedly out upon an open plain, with the living brook flashing in the sun before you, your heart shall be stirred from its depths with influences of which, at other times and in other places, you are but too ignorant. It is well to go on these excursions, tracing the brooks to their fountains.

Through the trees, now enrobing themselves anew, are to be seen vistas of enchantment. In the skies swim visions of fresh glory and beauty. On the landscape rests a golden halo, through which gleam bright edges of pictures, that never wholly entered the eye or even the imagination.

The waterbrooks, after which the heart that is truly in love with nature pants, fill the eye and the soul with their ceaseless little joys. They come racing down from the thickets, and the jungles, and the copses, — of hazel, and birch, and willow, — and begin their laughing course to the sea. Branches that drape their banks dip gently in the limpid flood, and shower down, as they lift themselves, rows of dripping pearls again. Watercresses that grow near their margins, leaning down to drink of the strength of their streams, tremble and quiver against the course of the waters, and tremble and quiver all through the day. Little birds seek out sly nooks along their borders, where they may rear their fledglings within sound of the lulling waters, and without the reach of malice and molestation.

There is a soothing, dreamy, beguiling music in their

dashing, and plashing, and rippling. It fills the heart with a flood of the most liquid melodies. It washes it clear of the tainting world thoughts, that do but deform so fair a structure. I can sit on a little headland by the brookside, and feel the change that is going on within. The brook will do it all—the brook and its influences. Yet the heart should be properly attuned beforehand.

The leap of a frog, as he throws out his long legs behind him, and plunges beneath the water to the opposite bank, will start you to a new train of thought. The plash of a lively troutlet, as he springs boldly from the surface for his prey, will excite you to the strangest emotions. The babbling of the sylvan nymph itself, singing its own idle song as down through the meadow it goes, will fill your ears with broken snatches of the most charming melodies.

By the brookside one learns much that nowhere else he can learn. Nay, much that should never have been received into the heart will here be unlearned again. It will thus be better for the afterlife. It will pave a clear way for good intentions, and high resolves, and pure thoughts.

One learns, above all else, contentment here as it can hardly be learned elsewhere. There is every surrounding influence to make the school a good one; and the precepts, too, are by no means formal or troublesome. They fall upon the heart like still summer rains on fallow ground. In these dear old places, the words of that charming philosopher and patient angler, Izaak Walton, come to me; and such words will never tire one with repetition:—

“That very hour which you were absent from me, I sat down under a willow by the water side, and consid-

ered what you had told me of the owner of that pleasant meadow in which you left me—that he has a plentiful estate, and not a heart to think so; that he has, at this time, many lawsuits depending; and that they both damped his mirth and took up so much of his time and thoughts that he himself had not leisure to take that sweet comfort I, who pretended no title to them, took in his fields; for I could there sit quietly, and, looking in the water, see some fishes sport themselves in the silver streams, others leaping at flies of several shapes and colors. Looking on the hills, I could behold them spotted with woods and groves; looking down upon the meadows, I could see, here a boy gathering lilies and lady-smocks, and there a girl cropping culverkeys and cowslips, all to make garlands suitable to this present month of May.

“I say, as I sat thus joying in my own happy condition, and pitying this poor rich man that owned this and many other pleasant groves and meadows about me, I did then thankfully remember what my Savior said—that *the meek possess the earth*, or, rather, they enjoy what others possess and enjoy not; for anglers and meek-spirited men are free from those high, those restless thoughts which corrode the sweets of life; and they, and they only, can say, as the poet has happily expressed it,—

‘Hail, blest estate of lowliness!  
Happy enjoyments of such minds  
As, rich in self-contentedness,  
Can, like the reeds in roughest winds,  
By yielding, make that blow but small  
By which proud oaks and cedars fall.’”

Was ever an argument for contentment so neatly

and so gently put? and by an angler, a brook lover, too!

When I used to turn my weary feet homeward from the hillsides at night, just as the gloaming began to set into the valleys, I felt that I had spent a day as it could nowhere else be spent. As I dabbled my hands in the running water, I made secret promises to myself and the seclusion that I would come back to the spot again at no far-off time. While I strung my speckled trout, or turned them over in my osier basket to count them, or banded together anew the wild flowers I had gathered on my way, I did not forget also to count up the pure and hearty pleasures of the day, and string them along in my memory, where they could readily be mine when I wanted them again.

In such a mood danced what follows from my heart. If it can claim no other title to existence, it at least has that of being born of an honest and an earnest feeling.

You may look for me when the south wind  
Is blowing on meadow and lea,  
And the waterbrooks slip from their chains,  
And laugh in their gladness and glee.  
When the buds have burst out from the boughs,  
And the birch tassels to and fro swing,  
You may look for me then by the bridge;  
For I shall be there in the spring.

When the gadding vines sway in the wind,  
And the sprays drop their shadows below;  
When the shoots and the tendrils are green,  
And the grass is beginning to grow;  
When the frog shrilly pipes at the pool;  
When the woods with the bird voices ring,—  
You may look for me then at the brooks;  
For I shall be there in the spring.

You may look for me when the fresh flowers  
Are springing from upland and wood;  
When the cowslips the broad meadows gem  
For many and many a rood.  
When the brook willows put on their green;  
When the insects are all on the wing,—  
You may look for me then in the mead;  
For I shall be there in the spring.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### MY AUNT.

AN aunt is apt to be a notable woman. She is either very much in a household, or else very little indeed. With *my* aunt, the former happened to be the case.

I picture her now — a maiden lady of the old school, with liberal feelings towards us children, overflowing with the milk of human kindness, full of odd sayings and witty conceits that smacked of the olden time, frolicking often with the rest of us, always looking out for our little comforts, and adopting one wee child for her special pet; what aunt was ever *more* than she?

Early in the morning she struck up her light, and went down to see that the fires were properly made, and the preparations for breakfast were properly begun. It was often quite as early as four o'clock when the flash of her light danced along the passages from the chambers, and I was waked at catching the sound of her shoes on the uncarpeted back stairs, as she went trippingly down.

No one ever loved the out-door country life more than she. She had care of all the poultry — ducks, hens, and turkeys; and in the early days of spring it was her special office to hunt up the stolen nests of the latter in the woods, and among the ledges, and in the budding birches, so that the young poults might not get strayed away when they came through the shell. She reared young chicks, brood upon brood; and, as the days grew unusually wet and cold, in the spring, she

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brought in one little callow nursling after another in her apron, shivering and bitterly lamenting, and warmed them carefully in baskets stuffed with cotton or wool. Such pets as she made of some of them, the like was hardly seen before! It would have made one laugh a long time, as it always did us, to see her plump a little downy-headed chick, scarce bigger than a small lump of dough, into her mouth; and we screamed, till we could not control ourselves, when the frightened thing gave a muffled "peep" in her mouth, like a living voice from a tomb!

On the clear June mornings she was a-field before even the dews were dried from the grass, hunting for the estray droves of her turkeys, that delighted to roam off into the woods and over the hillsides; and I have many a time followed her far-off wanderings with my eye, and wondered within myself if any pleasures could be purer, and healthier, and heartier than hers.

She gathered chestnuts with us in the fall, as the winds rattled them down from the high tree tops about our heads, making us all spring to our work the livelier; while she kept both hands busy at her own basket, and telling us that she would get more than all of us together. She picked whortleberries, too, in the old pastures on the side hill that abutted on the river, and her bark measures, baskets, and pails were always filled first; when she kindly came round to each of us, and slyly, and without a word, slipped heaped handfuls into our baskets.

She had beds of marigold, and beds of thyme, and clumps of sage, and rows of red and glossy peppers growing in the garden, to the proper husbanding of which not a little of her time was in the autumn devoted. She kept huge paper bundles of choice herbs

stowed away under the eaves of the garret and the storeroom, to which she was accustomed to apply for soothing consolation for some one of us almost every night in the winter. And the savory drinks that she decocted from their leaves, they were enough, I used to think, to tempt a very sybarite.

She always wore a cap, and, beside this, in the very cold winter mornings, a hood, upon her head. A pleasant expression sat continually on her face, so that there always seemed to be sunshine in the room where she was, even in the dimmest of rainy days. There was a look of *resignation* in her features, as if she had long ago made up her mind to find happiness for herself in all things just as they came along.

I know that I used to wonder if others ever were blessed with such aunts. I loved her, I thought, quite as much as I did my own mother; yet it must have been a somewhat different affection. She seemed to me like a very dear friend, while she was likewise a very dear relation. In my thought of her, and of her character, there was much that properly belonged to my estimate of my mother; and much, also, that belonged to nothing so much as my estimate of herself.

She made cats' cradles with strings for the children, on her fingers; and stocked the girls' playhouses with bits of broken china that she had hauled out of unknown corners; and sang snatches of the oddest and most laughable songs and ballads. We thought there must be nothing in the world that she could *not* do.

There was a spinning wheel in an old chamber, that seemed to be in an out-of-the-way place; and to that room she used to carry rolls of carded wool by the armful, and turn it off the spindle in threads of yarn, which were afterward wound in balls and deposited in cedar

trays. The drowsy hum of that old spinning wheel is in my ears now. The sound began slowly and low; then it quickened itself; then it seemed to deepen as it quickened; and then it made an almost deafening buzz, till every room in that part of the house was filled with the monotonous roar. And, finally, it died away again as it had begun, till there was nothing to be heard but the dull hum of the cord that spanned the wheel, drowsy and indistinct.

I remember that at times we lost our patience altogether with the old wheel, and not often with the person who kept up its music so perseveringly. We used sometimes to wish it was out the window, or any where else, in fact, where its buzz, buzz, buzz should be stopped. I suppose we must have got fairly sick of it. It grew absolutely tedious.

But I have no such feelings *now*!

I could sit now by the hour, listening to only that dull sound, and feel myself happy. Its recurring roll of music would carry me back to the old days that are sunk and covered up in the fog banks of time. Its very monotony would be sweet melody to me. It would wake all the old echoes that so long have slept in my memory. It would bring before me again the old faces, the old figures, the old voices. I should lose myself in its droning music, and my senses would be lapped in the quietest pleasure.

When company came, there was no one in the house more actively employed than she in trying to make them happy. She had a few words with them, — generally some pleasant jest, — and immediately ran out of the room to oversee the preparations for the table, or whatever came along next in order. Wherever she happened to be found, with young or old, or with both,

she determined that enjoyment should be the first and only thing thought of. Sometimes she seemed even to outdo herself, in her desires to scatter happiness about her.

Would to Heaven there were *more* of such genial and sunny souls in this clouded world! How much smoother would every thing go on for the auspicious change!

A vast array of aunts — maiden aunts and spinsters — have much to answer for. They are generally given to querulousness and investigation, particularly to the latter. A carriage cannot pass in the road but they must wonder, and so set all the rest to wondering, who is in it, and where they can be going, and what can be their business. They pry their way between others, and pluck out somehow their dearest secrets. They deal in large stocks of inuendoes, and blast with a breath what they could not stir with a storm. Every body's business is their business. They pick up the ragged bits, the shorn edges, the frayed threads of a conversation, and, by some process patented only of themselves, manage to weave it into a whole cloth.

Such an aunt was not *my* aunt, however. She belonged to no such class as that. We sometimes thought, to be sure, that she put us quite as many questions as we wanted to answer; but the feeling passed away with the moment, and made nothing like a permanent impression.

I well remember now how, of a Sunday evening, she used to place her round-eyed spectacles across her nose, and ponder as she perused in silence the pages of her large Bible, and how she often asked me to come to her side and read aloud a chapter or two to her, while she shoved back in her seat, and looked with that

same face of saintly resignation, first at the page I read, and then at me. I remember, too, the plain and earnest remarks she was wont to attach to the reading, in which her deep and earnest feeling not unfrequently got the better of her power of expression, and so each became suddenly lost in the other.

Usefulness was the warp of her nature; and this was the whole secret of her constant and unvarying happiness. A gleam of sunshine shone out always on her good face. There was always a genial warmth in her eyes, always a smile about her mouth.

There is no need that her picture should hang against the wall opposite me. The picture is even now in my memory; nay, it lives in the secret place of my heart.

Next to a mother, give me an aunt. She is the one to whom all the troubles of childhood may be safely carried. She will counsel and condole, sympathize and encourage. Like her heaped work basket, full as it already is with its varieties, her heart will still find room for you. It is she who will sleek down your hair on your forehead of a Sunday morning with her glove, and just once more adjust the little white collar that needs no alteration at all. It is she who will sit next you at church, and quietly slip into your hand a piece of flag, or a bunch of dill, or some other harmless *aromatique*; or she will kindly seat you on the spacious cricket at her feet, and lay your head in her lap, smoothing your child's head with her hand till the tones of the good clergyman are lost in a sweet slumber.

Blessings on the whole race of aunts! Theirs is a peculiar mission. Pray Heaven they may but fulfil it all as they should!

Heaven bring all its serenest joys to the heart of my

aunt especially! She has deserved much; for much has been given her to do, and it has been done faithfully.

Let it be long before the lustre in the eyes shall grow dim, or the strength of the busy hand grow palsied. Let the descent be slow, every step opening new promises beyond. And may the heart still beat whole, and the mind keep clear, till the new eyes look with delight on the celestial land, with its meadows, its mountains, and its skies, far transcending any that wake our thoughts to happiness here!

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE GARDEN.

"HAPPY," said the poet Gray, "are they who can create a rose, or erect a honeysuckle!"

"I never had any other desire," wrote Cowley to his friend Evelyn, "so like to covetousness as that one which I have always had — that I might be the master at last of a small house and a large garden, and there dedicate the remainder of my life only to the culture of flowers and the study of nature."

I think of the calm delight of Cowley at his little retirement in Chertsey, of Addison in his rustic nest near Rugby, of Pope in his five-acre Elysium at Twickenham, of Shenstone, refining upon nature itself at the Leasowes, and of all the great and good men that since then have tasted the sweetest and quietest pleasures of life in their gardens; and my heart turns once more to the memory of the old familiar garden at Dovecote.

It was not at all after art; it was nothing but nature. In those earlier times, people had not yet begun much to refine upon their out-door possessions; so that I fear the most of its charms will be found nowhere but in association and memory.

Yet it was a sweet little plot, stretching back from the old brown lodge for nearly an acre's space, terraced broadly, and substantially banked with the richest turf.

A mossy pale girded it on the side nearest the house, and the remainder of the cincture consisted of stone

walls, firmly laid, and embossed all over with gray and crisp lichens.

There were rows of peach, and apple, and plum trees, standing just at the edge of the wall, their rich fruits glistening in the summer's sun like the fabled apples of the Hesperides. Double lines of currant bushes stretched through nearly the whole garden, where we were busied with picking the red bunches of fruit, to be used in making light domestic wine. There was a half-decayed summer house near the end of this avenue of bushes, over which, on one side, an ambitious grape vine was stretching its clasping tendrils, and, on the other, a vigorous rose bush was reaching with its thorns, flowers, and leaves. A tame robin came to build her nest there every spring, and we climbed up by the benches and the lattice work to see the fledglings raise their ugly heads, and open their long, yellow throats.

In one spot was a long row of beets, whose glossy tops reddened in the morning sun till they seemed streaked with blood. In another was a row of carrots; and then of parsnips; and then of onions, their slender tops looking like spires above the soil.

On the terrace below there was a well-preserved bed, where my aunt cultivated her herbs, such as marigold, and valerian, and marjoram, and mint, and where, in the first warm days of spring, there was nothing but taking up and setting out again. Beyond this bed, the broad leaves of the squash vines lifted in the wind, disclosing the yellow blossoms or the streaked rind of the unripe squashes; and the green and prickly cucumbers nestled near the ground, as if to hide themselves; and a bed of Savoy and coarser cabbages, still beyond this, showed like a platoon of troops, with big, round caps on their heads, stiffly performing some skilful evolution.

Then came another terrace below this, the rich bank of turf inviting you to roll down it, and land on the strip of grass at its base.

Here was a little patch of clover, where the bees swarmed in the summer mornings, and over which the large butterflies hovered in their gay cloaks of gold, with dark, velvety borders. And here, too, stood a phalanx of young apple trees, thrusting the round and tender greenings through the clustering leaves.

Where the three terraces all merged at their farther extremities into one common ground, there was a compact army of bean poles, whereon clustered vines and leaves without number, and from which dangled scarlet, and purple, and dainty white bean flowers; and there the airy humming birds used to poise themselves on their gossamer wings, drinking dew from these brilliantly-tinted goblets with their slender bills. When the long, streaked pods hung down in such thick rows from the vines, we used to gather them into baskets by the handful.

And then came a high, double row of pea vines, making a complete network upon the birch brush, so that one could easily conceal himself there; and then a large patch of early potatoes, checkering the little reach of ground so that it looked like a very carpet.

Raspberries grew red upon the edges of the farther wall, and tomatoes held up their pale-green offerings to the ripening sun. Then came a little spot of grass in the distant corner, where a pet calf, secured to a stake, was suffered to wind up its rope as often as it would, and invited to give first indulgence to its gaminivorous propensities.

Back again by the avenue formed by the currant bushes, you came to the garden gate. Just at the post

in the corner were stationed large clumps of lilacs, —purple, and white, and red,—raising their spiked bunches of flowers for every one's enjoyment and admiration; and a few stately hollyhocks stood around, with the mien of sentries; and here and there a great sunflower lifted its head above all the rest, a bright, golden rim encircling the field of black seed within.

And young chickens got strayed away among the beds from their clucking mothers, jumping up at the bugs that swarmed among the leaves, or chasing the venturesome flies upon the patches of grass. I sometimes took the responsibility upon myself of seeing that they all got safely home again after their long wanderings.

In the spring, it was my highest delight to be at work in the garden, spading, and hoeing, and weeding; though I confess I liked the last employment not a whit better than boys generally do. There was then such life and freshness in every thing. In the summer, too, I loved to straggle in the shadow of the bushes, or sit down in the rustic arbor beneath the leafy grape vine, or watch the blue and purple cheeks of the plums as they grew daily blacker and riper, or immature yellow humble bees in the hollyhock flowers and the squash blossoms. In the autumn, it was a busy harvest time —when the yellow tomatoes, and the blood-red peppers, and the rattling bean pods, and the rich-colored squashes were all coming in; when the chickens, now grown large, went searching busily about for a taste of the esculents that might have fallen behind; and the sun fell slantwise through the yellow bean vines, and upon the mossy walls; and every feeling, and every thought, and every association was of the pleasant days about the home hearth that were yet to come.

The old garden became an invaluable teacher to me

at the last. It becomes a healthful instructor to every one.

He who is given to quiet and meditative labor in his garden is not the one in whose thoughts was ever born a crime. Horticulture has an effect, secret and silent, to rein in the too impulsive feelings, and to tone the heart to sentiments of gentleness and love.

Of course, there are enough whose unconditional praises of mortar and brick, street and number, will never end. They were *made* for the town, and extremely one-sided creations are they, too. Only when in town do they live. For such people, an employment like gardening can hold out not the first charm. By the side of good, healthy, garden dirt, they could think of nothing but soiled clothes and smutty hands. They could never learn to write to their friends in town as Bolingbroke wrote to Swift: "I am in my farm; and here I shoot strong and tenacious roots. I have caught hold of the earth, to use a gardener's phrase; and neither my friends nor my enemies will find it an easy matter to transplant me again."

To a well-furnished mind and a healthy heart there can be no calmer and deeper enjoyment than that drawn from a good garden spot. The very hoeing of the clods is but another process of turning over the thoughts again. The sprouting of the seeds, their silent but steady growth, and the tender and watchful culture bestowed upon them, are but so many illustrations of the birth, growth, and culture of the hidden feelings of the heart.

In a garden is learned contentment; and repose grows as a mental habit out of it. Peacefulness distils gently on the heart, as dew is distilled from the sky

upon the flowers. Thought engenders thought; and the soul finds all the pictures of heaven mirrored in its own depth, unshattered by the ruthless violence of the world.

"Henceforth I shall know  
That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure;  
No plot so narrow, be but Nature there,  
No waste so vacant, but may well employ  
Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart  
Awake to love and beauty."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## SUNDAY IN SUMMER.

It always seemed the stillest day in the whole year. There was a hush in the talk in which all indulged, so that it seemed solemn. The house was always more quiet than on the other days of the week; and the spirit communicated itself in some way to the animals and the fowls out of doors, nay, to the very birds that sang so much more sweetly in the tree tops.

Perhaps a good part of this was only imagination, after all; yet it must be confessed it wrought on our minds as it had power to do at no other time.

Those clear, calm, holy Sabbath mornings! How brightly they dawned in the sweet summer time! What a religious aspect wore Nature herself, as men ceased from their work, and the fields lay spread out silently in the sun! What a balm was in the air—of lilacs, and laburnums, and honeysuckles, and roses! How quietly the doves sat and dressed their plumage on the sill of the old dovecote, as if they would not forget due preparation for the day! How pleasantly the old Tabitha looked in the sun, licking her coat smoothly till it glistened and shone under her tongue!

I remember it all but too well. Alas! alas! what boy is there that does not remember very freshly, what grown man is there that does not live it all over again, when he takes a Sunday morning walk over the meads,

and down through the valleys, and beside the flowering hedgerows?

I plucked a large branch of the lilac that blossomed near the garden gate, and robbed a rose tree of the flower I had religiously watched through the week. This latter went into my button hole. In the garden I found all that its simple variety offered at my disposal — bachelors' buttons, foxglove, violets, and pinks, and larkspurs.

The Sabbath prayer rises even now to my ears, coming from the lips of a pious father gone to his reward. The sun still shines in at the eastern windows, so that they blaze from afar in the eyes of the traveller. There is the same gentle hurrying up stairs and down stairs, into the sitting room, into the parlor, some for one thing, and some for another. The same sober procession — a family procession — marches off down the avenue to the road, and winds away through sunshine and shadow to the village church.

As we come to a patch of woods, through which the old country road is cut, we see the squirrels springing from their leafy coverts, racing along on the moss-spotted stone walls, and disappearing again in the deep green around them, and hear the scream of the wood birds in the secluded aisles of the forest as they mingle their chants for the sacred day, and stop a moment to watch the purling of a little brook, or listen to its prattle and babble as it goes to hide itself in the wood again.

The plot of green grass before the church is covered with men, who have assembled in knots and groups to chat over the rustic events of the week. The church windows are raised; and, as we file into the capacious old family pew, a fresh drift of air comes pleasantly

through, turning over the leaves of the opened hymn books in the windows, and rustling the faded fringe that skirts the base of the pulpit. Old ladies are early in their seats in the corners; and they dispense dill and caraway freely among the young children near them, telling them, in a whisper, that they must be careful to make no noise.

The members of the choir straggle in, one by one, and the busy chorister, bustling among the heaps of oblong books, talks loudly, and reaches over familiarly, yet with an air of authority, to the females. The strings of the violin begin to twing twang sharply, as preliminary to the harmonies of the day. Ever and anon the deeper viol throbs out one of its bass sounds, that seem, in comparison with the other, like the surge and swell of the ocean. The chorister carries his head stiffly, and of necessity; for extravagantly high shirt collars, extravagantly starched, seem to annoy him quite to the verge of his endurance. And all the male singers wear such large bows to their cravats, and have their hair brushed so smartly, and affect such worldly-wise looks among themselves, that they are to be known among thousands as the singers in the village choir.

During the sermon, which is apt to be long on these weary days of summer, many a child lays his head in his mother's lap, and falls soundly asleep; and many a good deacon, probably satisfied that all is going on as it should, falls asleep likewise, leaning his nodding head upon his hand. The sermon has a great many divisions and subdivisions; and I used to think sometimes it had more "lastlys" and "finallys" than all the rest of it together.

At length it draws to a close. The people rise at the

last prayer and for the benediction. The "intermission" comes next, which is passed in friendly talk about the church, and in at the neighbors' dwellings, the boys stealing around behind the church to tell their exploits to each other, or to "swap" jackknives, and the men talking of their produce and their cattle, and the great good done by the recent shower.

As the congregation separate at night for another week, the great doors of the church shut heavily after them, and the old temple is soon quiet and deserted. The hymn books lie just as they were strewn about on the seats, and the singing books of the choir are in confusion. Yet there they will lie without molestation for the seven still days to come.

Walking slowly home again, the afternoon being yet but half spent, we watch the shadows of the clouds on the far-off grainfields, as the sun chases them to their coverts in the woods. Every thing says "Sunday." Every thing looks "Sunday." The very stillness in the air breathes "Sunday." The holy spirit of the day settles down upon us all, not once depressing, but all the while subduing, our spirits and our thoughts.

We pass pleasant country cottages, embowered in shrubbery, and plain white houses, with not a bough or a vine to keep off the fierce and gairish sun. Some of the latter put in us odd thoughts of people's ideas of comfort and of taste — as if it cost any more to suffer a pretty shade tree to grow, or a flowering rose tree to cling, or a leafy vine to clamber. Before some such houses, the hot sun pouring down in an unbroken flood, and the lines of heat wavering and streaming from clapboards and shingles, sickly poultry wallow, and rank weeds wilt and die. There are no blinds; nothing but gaudy paper curtains within, with a big figure and a

dazzling or a fiery ground. The sight impresses one almost as deeply as the sight of real destitution. Either makes a dismal picture of desolation.

Arrived home again, we seat ourselves about the table that stands spread for us all, and, after our repast, the children read aloud in the family Bible to parents and grandparents, when the servants likewise are sometimes called in. Then comes the good old family reunion; when conversation goes on at a pleasant rate, and the events of the day, more especially the sermon of the minister, are commented on in a spirit of candor and kindness.

And after this was a walk in the garden, where I was wont to stroll down the little avenue formed by the currant bushes, or hide myself from sight among the bean vines, or stretch out on the fresh grass beneath the fruit trees, watching the insects, and listening to the birds, and gazing up into the azure vault of heaven, seeming never so distant, and limitless, and deep as now. The poet's beautiful lines come to me at this time, as I think of the feelings that then used to scud over my soul, when a light cloud straggled across the face of the sky:—

"I would I were like thee, thou little cloud,  
Ever to live in heaven; or, seeking earth,  
To let my spirit down in drops of love;  
To sleep with night upon her dewy lap;  
And, the next dawn, back with the sun to heaven;  
And so on through eternity, sweet cloud!  
I cannot but think some senseless things  
Are happy."

And when at last the night came down, — calm, serene, and holy, — it always seemed night worthy to be married to such a day. Far into the evening we sat at

the open windows, or in the doors, talking to each other in low tones, and counting the stars that were coming through the blue above us, and listening to the "droning flight" of the beetle.

The day went out as it came in, leaving the heart full of the highest and the holiest feelings. It was always a day of rest. From that point the spirits bounded forward to the duties of the week, refreshed and vigorous.

A Sunday in summer seems hardly Sunday to me now, except in the heavenly quiet of the country.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE OLD SCHOOL HOUSE.

BOYHOOD—boyhood! What an age is it of hope and enjoyment, of trial and sorrow! How big are all our little griefs, and how limitless seem the threescore years of human life! With how much of imagination are all our thoughts tinted, and with what strangely-blent colors are our pictures of the world all drawn!

There comes to a man but one boyhood; would to Heaven—many are ready to say—our manhood were but the childish age lived over again!

It was a walk of a mile and more to the old school house, and, on the summer mornings, we reached it a full hour before the "master." Then what gay times were sure to follow! The door was open, and the windows; and through first one, and then the other, we kept up the wildest sport tolerated on the hither side of Chickasaw villages and hunting grounds.

The school house itself was one of the remaining curiosities of the back age. It was of but a single story, and had windows thickly set in on every side, and a very spare chimney, exactly in the middle of its many-sided roof. The panes were very small, scarce large enough for even the whole of a child's face to flatten itself upon. The outer door was clumsy and heavy, and painted blue; and when it was fastened at all, it was with a rusty padlock, as much past its proper time of service as the old school house itself.

A single row of desks was secured to the wall on each side of the room, and benches were placed on the outside. There were no such needless encumbrances to these as backs, and here many and many a promising boy learned how to make a round-shouldered, stooping man.

The long box stove, of cast iron, stood as nearly in the middle of the room as may be, and when in winter it was not almost at a red heat, it was sure to be dimly black and cold. And, with such sudden variations of temperature, we managed, under favor of Heaven, to go through our school days without Death's laying his chill hand upon us. We had never heard of such inventions as ventilators in those primitive times; but when the room grew so hot that almost every other child's face was as red as a roasted apple, the thoughtful "master" opened wide the door, and let in the bleak wintry air upon us in most plentiful draughts.

In the winter noons, after our baskets and tin pails had been cleared of the "dinners" brought in them, some of us took to building snow forts near the school house, in which one party would obstinately intrench themselves, while the other played the none too gentle part of besiegers; and at such times the snowballs flew thick and fast, till the air seemed full of whizzing lumps of snow. How many a battered back and bruised face was there at such a time! and what a sorry-looking mess the besiegers grew to be, before they succeeded in carrying the white fortress by storm! and how many a play of this kind turned into serious quarrel before it was over! And then, to begin the afternoon hours, we had red and wet hands, and wetter and colder feet, and — how feet were rubbed fiercely together for the biting "chilblains!"

On the long days of summer, we had many a pleasant romp with the rosy-faced girls before the school began; and we did not scruple at times, either, to hazard all our old friendship with each other for the sake of playing a chivalrous part before the fair one whose smiles were then worth the world to us. How foolish it all looks now! and yet what has mature life any different? We do but pine, and grow jealous, and lay awake nights to plot schemes, and go hungry days for anxiety, — and all this for dear woman. For her we strive; for her we are ambitious; for her we labor to outdo each other. She fires our hearts with passions, and is as able now as in the schoolboy days to intoxicate us with a smile, or make us go mad with her scorn. What is this all but the old school time come back again?

There was no shade about the school house of any description. They used to say the building had been painted white once; but it was nothing but brown now, and the very dingiest brown at that, too. Yet better so than a glaring, flashing white, without a blind to a window, and no shade trees within a quarter of a mile.

Children have need to be thankful that such receptacles are not open for them now.

On Saturday afternoons, some few of us met, by previous concert, at the school house, to pass away the time till dark in "playing ball," at which we had quite a variety of games. Sometimes, too, we did nothing but play at "hide and whoop," tearing like mad buffaloes about the old building, yelling like so many infuriate Indians, and disturbing — though we none of us stopped to think of it then — the peace of the neighborhood for a quarter of a mile.

Oftentimes we strolled off into the woods not very

far distant, where we made roaring fires under the farmers' walls, especially in the autumn days, and roasted potatoes that we had filched from the big bins at home, or played impromptu Indian games, holding war councils, and giving ourselves up to uproarious festivities. Those were famous times for us in the woods, and will stand out distinct on the plane of my memory till the "last syllable" of time that is "recorded" for me here.

Standing as it did at the corner of two roads that crossed each other, the old school house, when filled with life, seemed to the traveller like a hive of swarming bees. Such a buzzing all the time went up, one would have thought the place to be Hymettus itself!

Some of the scholars studied very hard and very loud, holding on by either side of their book, and moving their bodies steadily forward and backward as their lips let out the words. Some sat lazily leaning on one palm, with their book moved a good distance from them, and their eyes still farther from their book, out the window. Some of the younger and roguish ones watched gathering knots of flies in the sun on the floor, and slyly improved their opportunity, when the teacher's back was turned, to deluge them by spitting. And the very small children sat on very small benches, and half the time were stretched out asleep, when they were not intently studying the antics of those older than themselves.

What a mixed community is a country school, sure enough! Children of all ages, dispositions, and capacities are temporarily garnered there, some of them to be afterward picked out with the wheat of the world, and others to be blown about here and there with the chaff. Humanity is within that small compass condensed. It

is but in pleasant miniature. The passions, the hopes, the vaulting ambition, the deep and lasting affections,—there are none of them yet grown. They have hardly thrust their head through the warm and mellow heart-soil. Their characters, their influence, their destiny,—they remain to be written. The fair sheet is yet without a line or a blot.

On the low, wooden benches are mapped out fields of action that the deeds of a lifetime afterwards shall hardly be able to cover. By the opened windows, the summer airs drawing softly in, fire is set to imaginations that may come some day to charm the world. Idle hours slip away, when young and bright eyes chase wanton butterflies over the green turf, or watch the birds building nests in the apple-tree boughs; and perhaps during those very hours fancies are budding and bursting that shall, in the hereafter, make some poor soul's life seem, after all, but a long holiday.

We cannot tell what lies in so little as a "master's" frown. We know not what trifling matter it is that may give a color to the child's whole afterlife. There is no saying what short day in the school year may of itself, with its hundred little incidents, fill up the young heart with a sentiment and a purpose that will distinguish the man through all his earthly years.

Droning hum of the old school house! it is by this that we know the honey is being gathered!

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### A PICTURE WITHOUT A FRAME

WHEN we came home from school, one afternoon in summer, the old man was sleeping soundly in his chair. It was much earlier than usual, and the sun fell across the floor at his feet. He was sitting just before the door, where he must have been thoughtfully looking out over the lawn when this deep sleep surprised him.

There he sat, his shrivelled hands folded in his lap, and his snowy head partly dropped on his bosom. He had such a simple and such a childlike expression about his countenance that I stopped quite involuntarily to regard it.

The flies were swarming in the sun, and buzzing about on the upper half of the opened windows, and making silent circuits about the middle of the room; and the droning music of their buzzing seemed to harmonize indescribably with the time, the place, and the touching scene.

It seemed like Sunday in the room, so sacred was the silence. The shadows of the elm-tree leaves played gently over the doorstone, as the summer winds drifted lazily through the branches overhead; and I fancied they might checker the old man's dreams.

Was he really dreaming? Were his thoughts as they were fifty or sixty years ago? Did his feelings go back to the old days? and were they renewing all their freshness and their youth again?

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Did he feel the grateful dew, glistening and reviving, upon the exhausted soil of his heart once more? Were the bracing winds again drawing, with their refreshing influences, over his enervated brain? Were new fires feeling their subtle and secret way along his veins, until they warmed once more his weary and withered heart?

I asked myself all these questions at once, while I stood, with my hands crossed behind me, looking at him. I tried to carry myself forward in life, till my imagination reached the verge of his advanced years. I thought of myself with palsied limbs, and trembling hands, and white head, and dim eyes that were deeply sunken when they were closed. I tried to picture to my fancy my own appearance, and, above all, my own feelings, when, by Heaven's bounty, I might become as old as he.

It was too much. My young heart filled with strange and sudden emotions.

Heaven pity the man who comes to his old age with nothing but a heart barren of sentiment and a mind hungering for food! Such have need of nothing then so much as pity. Like lost beings groping their way about in some unpeopled solitude of a cavern, they feel their path towards all the remaining happiness to which their feeble instincts lead them. They seem bereft of every thing—friends, fortune, and sympathy. They mope in the household corners, counting the idle flies in the sun, or watching the crumbling of the ashes on the hearth, or lamenting the days and the joys that are gone forever. Their souls grovel. They are, as Sir Richard Steele calls them, but "reverend vegetables." They have not thoughts that can elevate them above dreary memories; instincts are all that furnish their

minds. They cannot draw pleasure from others' intercourse, and have none at all to spare of their own. Literally is it *dragging* out the rest of their existence; and thankful ought they to be when the end comes, and they commence their lives anew. Rather is it delightful to see an old man approach his end with the courage a full mind and ripe heart can alone inspire,

"Sustained and soothed by an unfaltering trust,  
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch  
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

Poor old man! thought I. What would you not give to be young again! to revel in the freshness and vigor of new life, with the blood flying briskly in your veins, and a thousand pleasant pictures swimming in your brain! How can you help envying me my own youth, as your fading eyes follow me about the room, through the door, and across the garden or the lawn? What can be your dreams? Are they of the old time? Are they colored with the dyes of your younger feelings? Are they filling your heart with secret sorrows that you can never go back, but must ever keep going forward?

He raised his head, and opened his eyes full upon me. They were filled with tears!

And this is what long after grew out of the picture:—

An old man sits in his high-backed chair  
Before an open door,  
While the sun of a summer afternoon  
Falls hot across the floor,  
And the drowsy click of an ancient clock  
Has notched the hour of four.

A breeze blows in, and a breeze blows out,  
From the scented summer air;  
And it flutters now on his wrinkled brow,  
And now it lifts his hair;  
And the leaden lid of his eye drops down,  
As he sleeps in his high-backed chair.

The old man sleeps, and the old man dreams;  
His head drops on his breast;  
And his hands relax their feeble hold,  
And fall to his lap in rest.  
The old man sleeps, and in sleep he dreams,  
And in dreams again is blest.

The years unroll their fearful scroll:  
He is a child again;  
A mother's tones are in his ear,  
And drift across his brain;  
And he chases gaudy butterflies  
Far down the rolling plain.

He plucks the wild rose in the woods,  
And gathers eglantine,  
And holds the golden buttercups  
Beneath his sister's chin;  
And he angles in the meadow brook  
With a bent and naked pin.

He loiters down the grassy lane,  
And by the brimming pool;  
And a sigh escapes his parted lips,  
As he hears the bell for school;  
And he wishes it never were nine o'clock,  
And the morning never were full.

A mother's hand rests on his head;  
Her kiss is on his brow;  
But a summer breeze blows in at the door,  
With the toss of a leafy bough;  
And the boy is a white-haired man again;  
*But his eyes are tear-filled now!*

## CHAPTER XXX.

### NOTHING BUT A LOVE STORY.

Miss NANCY went with Milly over to Mr. Brimmer's, at his particular request, to pass three or four days. Milly enjoyed every minute of the visit. There was a friend of Mr. Brimmer's there a part of the time; and he and the minister had a great many stories to tell. The following was one of Mr. Brimmer's own, that pleased Miss Nancy vastly.

Mr. Brimmer said that the man was no relative of his, though, as the story went, he bore the same name with himself.

A confirmed bachelor was Mr. Shubael Brimmer; and he had a housekeeper.

So he sat in the little room that he called his office study, with the sun glinting on the white branches of the sycamores before the house, stroking his abundant double chin with one hand, and twirling his gold-bowed spectacles between the thumb and index finger of the other.

It was a strange thing, this world, thought Mr. Brimmer. So full of changes; so beset with chances; offering so many modes for a man — and especially a single man — to get out of it. Life is hardly in the flush of its morning before the sun reaches hold of the meridian; and hardly is it high noon before the rays of the great luminary slope mournfully to the west. And he stroked

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his chin with new vigor, as the sad thoughts came over him.

"What am I to do, now?" said Mr. Brimmer to himself. "Here I am! Here I am afraid I always *shall* be till —"

He could not bear to once think of death's taking *him*!

"And when I am gone," pursued he, "what then? what then? No one for me to leave behind; no one to wet the grass on my grave with her tears; no one to nurse my memory, or to live after me in this large house of mine, or to sigh once in a while to sympathizing visitors, 'Poor, dear Mr. Brimmer!'"

He had been thinking that afternoon of making his will.

Now, for a man to sit soberly down, and look the matter sternly in the face, saying to himself, without any dodging or equivocation, "The chances are that I can live but a few years at the most, and I *may* go even much sooner than I think for, so every thing shall be set in order," it surely is no trifling affair. Much as we may profess to detest the world, there isn't one who does not cling to life till the last point of his time. A man at fifty, or at sixty, or even at seventy, though he may have been wonderfully sobered with what he has gone through, still hates to cut the last remaining strand that holds him over the gulf. I should, therefore, be very ready to conclude the serious contemplation of making one's will an act of moral heroism, were it not that *Custom* — that old worker in brass and bronze — has managed in a great measure to take the edge off of responsibility, and to turn the matter into only a common, every-day affair.

Mr. Shubael Brimmer was sitting before his desk

while he was thinking of his will. That desk was quite an old-fashioned piece of furniture, put together mostly after the style of our great-grandfather's day — with a peaked top, that would, perhaps, be called Gothic *redivivus* now, and a turn-down cover, that was spread with green baize; having three drawers beneath, on whose face was a trifle of carved filigree work; and standing on huge round balls, clutched fiercely by claws of dragons hid away somewhere.

There were papers lying before him, spread out over the green baize covering; and a copy of the statutes, bound in rich russet calf; and a huge inkstand, in whose several holes were pierced many stained and blackened pens. Immediately before him, too, lay a paper from which he had apparently just taken his pen; for the ink was moist upon its white surface, and the pen showed indubitable signs of recent service. He had tipped back in his chair, and, twirling his gold-bowed spectacles in one hand, and stroking his chin with the other, seemed given up altogether to the moment's revery.

The paper he had just drawn up was his will itself. It specified the several articles of value of which he knew himself possessed, and then carefully made distribution of them all. His house was set down; his stocks were down; his landed property was there, all in black and white; the whole was there. Not a thing had been forgotten. These were all carefully counted up, with their values respectively annexed, much as if he had been a merchant at his counter, taking an inventory of his stock in trade.

But yet the will was not *signed*!

Here he hesitated. This was the pinch with him; and a very ugly pinch was it, too. Had he disposed of this ample estate to *his mind*? exactly to his mind?

But then, again, it was not yet *signed*! It was worthless yet. It was nothing more than a sheet of scrawled paper. It would take that magic *name* of his, written legibly underneath, and three witnesses' names thrown in besides, to give it value; and those names had none of them yet been written. And while he was thinking of it, he thought of every thing else too.

"A wife? Ay, a *young* wife!" What could be better?

The afternoon sun had got round so as to throw itself across the carpet on the floor. A stray gust shook the few remaining leaves of the sycamores together, so that their mingled shadows danced strangely on the figures of the carpet. There was much in the aspect of things out of doors, in the very atmosphere itself, that day, to set a man so far advanced as Mr. Brimmer to thinking soberly of the russet that was fast tinting his years, and of the "sere and yellow leaf" that was soon to follow after.

"There's my housekeeper," said he to himself. "A *better* woman doesn't probably live. She gets me faithfully all my meals, and is good for seeing to the fires, and never forgets to keep the fire-dogs bright, or the hearth clean swept. She is a good woman, Mrs. Timmaty is; and I really should like to be one to give her away in marriage to some man quite as good as herself; for such she certainly deserves, and such she certainly will get.

"But she's *too old*! Pshaw! why do I *think* of it? As a *housekeeper*, I'll wager all I'm worth she can't be outdone by living woman; but for a *wife*, — a wife for *me*, — to take on herself the very respectable name of *Brimmer*, — Mrs. Shubael Brimmer, — nonsense! It's the merest farce in the world for me to be *thinking* of it!"

He picked up the paper again, and read it over anew, sinking his chin far into the depths of his ample cravat, and humming or drawling aloud as he read.

"I'll do it! I'll do it! She *can't* refuse!" said he, in a sudden impulse, laying the paper down again. "She can't refuse so good an offer as that! The world will applaud me for doing it, too! The world will look at me then, and look at my wife, too, and say, 'Upon my word, Mr. Brimmer, but, for once in your life, you've done a very handsome thing!' And the world, for once in *its* life, wouldn't be at all out of the way in its judgment, either!"

"She's a *poor* girl; and her mother is poor, too; and what a heap this would be to her! and coming so unexpectedly! And how the old house would be lit up with sunshine! not such a sickly sunshine as that on the carpet yonder; but one that'll put gladness into a man's face as well as his heart!"

At a rather early period in life, Mr. Brimmer had managed to get a little way ahead of the world. He had a bold genius in the way of traffic, and determined on giving up the retail business in baskets and molasses to less enterprising men, and staking all he had saved in a different kind of venture. A dash of his pen was enough to transport the value of his effects from the village to the metropolis, and a four-horse stage coach did the same for him.

He ventured. He watched eagerly and closely. He dreamed of nothing, night and day, but success; and success was his. Shubael Brimmer, from being a very respectable village grocer, became, in a brief time, a rich man. And still nursing his advantages, his wealth rolled up; and he remained in the city to look after it the sharper, until at length his old tastes drew him back

to the quiet village again, where he at once set about building a large house and furnishing it with a good housekeeper.

Until this very day, he had not had the courage to sit down and write his will. What first led him to it, he had never told any one. And while he was working away at that, and thinking how little he had enjoyed with his money too, after all, it was just the most natural thing conceivable for him to let a sober thought slide into his mind about matrimony.

Mr. Brimmer was — well, he never made known his age. His cheeks were ruddy, and richly streaked in places; so that people rather liked to look at them. He dressed well, kept up an excellent establishment, and looked out sharply for the best cuts that were to be had in the market, for which he always had to pay corresponding prices. And he was the only man in the town who carried an ivory-headed cane or straddled a pair of gold bows across his nose.

As this happy thought of a wife flashed on him, he jumped from his chair and stood bravely on his feet. He had for some time — he now confessed to himself — been much bewitched with the pretty face of Kitty Clair, and wondered why this thought of matrimony had never seriously crossed his mind before. He had many a time caught himself staring at her in church, when, but for her bright eyes, the sermon must have been much too somniferous for him. He had once or twice even thought he should like to "see her home" from an evening conference, were it not that people had such a very unamiable way of talking about what did not concern them at all.

But *now*, with that will before him, waiting only to be signed that it might have a meaning, he had, some-

how, come to himself as he never had before. It was a sober piece of business, this dying and leaving your property to you hardly knew whom. Nay, it was an awful thing to die, without so much as the soft hand of a woman who loves you to shut your eyelids soothingly down!

He would get married; and he would marry no one but Kitty Clair. So to the little brown cottage of the widow Clair he went.

It was evening — the same evening; and he knocked bravely and stoutly at the door, using his own knuckles. But what of that? He was sure he was rapping his own knuckles *for* something!

The widow came to the door herself. She was by no manner of means an ugly-looking woman; and, in sooth, Mr. Brimmer might have travelled a great ways and found no better woman for a wife than she.

When she saw who her visitor was she courtesied, and blushed deeply, and came near letting the lamp fall, and exclaimed, —

“Why, Mr. Brimmer!”

But there was *business* in the bachelor; and so he stopped not for surprise or sentiment. He only remarked, —

“Good evening, Mrs. Clair.”

“Will you walk in, Mr. Brimmer?” she asked him.

“Thank you,” returned he.

And he set his foot at once across the threshold, and went in. The blushing widow showed him into the best room; not a whit better than the parlor of Mr. Brimmer’s mansion, to be sure, but yet a charmingly snug little bit of a room. He sat down on the sofa, covered with a very picturesque chintz, and tried to feel comfortable and composed. Ordinarily, he was a

man of great equability; but something threw him off his balance now. His mind was all unhinged; and the whole thing had to be done, too, before he had had time to think of such a catastrophe.

He twirled his watch seals, and run his fingers nervously through his sparse hair, and toyed with the broad, black ribbon by which his eyeglass was suspended from his neck, and plunged his fists deeply into the soft chintz-covered cushion on which he sat, much like a woman kneading dough. But he seemed to recover himself at none of these occupations.

The widow Clair sat not a great ways from him; and if she had not been quite as much disconcerted as he was himself, she would certainly have noticed his embarrassment. Mr. Brimmer might be sharp at a bargain; but it was plain that he had but little skill in addressing a pretty woman.

“The winter is coming upon us very fast, Mr. Brimmer,” said the widow, opportunely rising and replenishing the fire.

“Very — very, indeed!” acquiesced the bachelor.

“I have felt the cold quite sensibly of late,” continued she, punching the coals vigorously. “I shall expect to see snow very soon now. I almost dread the coming of winter, too.”

“It’s a very uncomfortable season, Mrs. Clair,” he replied; and he shrugged his shoulders, and shuddered, as if he were cold.

“A *very* uncomfortable season,” repeated he, the shiver breaking his sentence in twain.

“I always think of the poor at such times,” said she. “I always say to myself, Mr. Brimmer, ‘God help them!’”

And she spatted her hands quite daintily together, to

shake off the ashes that were not upon them, and resumed her seat, facing the bachelor.

He was lost a moment in thought, or, at least, he appeared to be; for he gazed abstractedly into the dancing flames, and for once his hands had rest from their nervous motions.

"You are enjoying excellent health now, are you not?" persisted she, determined to be as agreeable to her rare visitor as she knew how.

The bachelor was thinking of Kitty as he looked in the fire, and wondering if the *town* could furnish him, or any other man, with so pretty a wife as she. So he did not seem to catch her remark at all.

She was a persevering woman, and she had it over again:—

"You are in good health, Mr. Brimmer, I suppose?"

"Excellent, madam; excellent health, I assure you," said he, quickly, started from his reverie. "And your own health is good, I believe, Mrs. Clair?"

"It is, sir, thank you," was her reply, accompanying it with a very easy sort of a bow.

And then ensued a silence again. It grew at last painful.

Mr. Brimmer's thoughts were all the time upon Kitty. Her he had come that evening expressly to see, and her alone. He might regard her mother very highly, but that was all. He thought he *loved* Kitty, and that was much more. And Kitty it was his determination to see. The question was, how to get at her.

He began hitching in his seat again. Mrs. Clair must certainly have thought either that he was a very uneasy sort of a body, or that her sofa was extremely hard; it hardly matters which. But not a word, with all his hitching, about Kitty. He had not so much as men-

tioned her name yet. The charming widow had come in between him and his purpose, and set him suddenly all adrift from his reckoning.

In the other room, opposite this, sat Kitty herself. Her mother had left her alone; but she was not alone *now*. A forbidden lover had slyly managed to steal a moment of bliss in her company, having waited watchfully at the window till he was quite sure of his safety.

Bob Gray—as every body called him—was a rather wild and prankish youth, of good heart, perhaps, yet not sufficiently sedate to meet the favor of Kitty's mother. The widow had never absolutely forbidden him the house; but then, when he did come, she was particular to keep herself about, keeping a sharp eye on him likewise.

As it happened,—and as it very often happens in just such cases as this,—Kitty was desperately in love with Robert Gray, and never for a moment troubled her head or her heart about any other gallant than he. He had reached her heart just as she had reached his. And to tinge the affair with just romance enough to throw a new color and interest around the whole subject, Mrs. Clair stepped in with her opposition. This did but serve to kindle their zeal anew.

So there they sat together, enjoying themselves, while the widow was doing her best to try to make Mr. Brimmer enjoy himself too, though happily ignorant of the state of affairs in the other room. Kitty looked exceedingly roguish, and Robert looked exceedingly pleased. They surely must have been laughing between themselves about Mr. Brimmer's coming to see Kitty's mother; for it would seem as if no other matter could have given their enjoyment such a relish.

"Is Kitty at home?" finally broke out the embar-

passed bachelor in the other room. "I mean, Mrs. Clair, is *Miss* Kitty at home?"

Of course the widow was greatly surprised with such a question from Mr. Brimmer, as well she might be, and, possibly, quite as much chagrined as surprised. Few young widows—on the hither side of forty, for instance—ever give up their chances; and it is not fair to conclude that so blooming a woman as Mrs. Clair had given up hers.

So she only looked very much astonished, and stared strangely all about the room, and said, "Yes."

Then another pause.

"Kitty is a very fine girl," ventured Mr. Brimmer again.

Mrs. Clair did not deem it necessary to say that she thought she was.

"How old has she got to be, Mrs. Clair?" said the bachelor. "I declare, she has come up so fast since I lived in the village before, I shouldn't pretend to know any thing of her age."

"She is about eighteen, Mr. Brimmer," returned the widow, with a smile.

That smile meant, "But why am not I as young as she, Mr. Brimmer? Take another look, and tell me how much can be the difference between us, Mr. Brimmer!"

"I declare," said he, "I wouldn't think time slipped away so fast!"

"Yes, Mr. Brimmer," returned she, trying a new tack, "we shall find that these young people are fast crowding us along. We can't wait for them, nor can they wait for us,"—she hardly knew what she did say to him,— "but, Mr. Brimmer, *time* never practises deceptions with any of us."

And as she spoke, she gave a quick glance at his frosty head, and then threw her bright eyes into the fire.

"I've noticed Kitty very often," said the bachelor. "I've noticed her in meeting. You rarely see a prettier face there than hers, Mrs. Clair!"

He thought in this way to flatter her by praising her daughter; but the widow had just beauty enough of her own—and a pretty good knowledge of it, besides—to be a trifle jealous of his compliments to Kitty. And she half pouted at what her visitor said.

"You may well be proud of your daughter," continued the bachelor. "I'll venture to say, Mrs. Clair, that you may well be *proud* of her. Egad! but I wish I had such a daughter myself! She'd be a treasure in my house!"

"As she certainly is in mine," interrupted the widow.

"But you say she is at home, Mrs. —"

"She is; yes, sir," said the mother.

"And can I see her?" pursued he.

"Certainly. I will call her in!" And she rose from her chair to do as she offered.

"But, Mrs. Clair! Mrs. Clair!" called the bachelor, "I won't trouble you! I have only a word in—only a word or two to say to her; all in confidence, Mrs. Clair,—all in confidence! Can't I just step into the room where she is, now? Yes, let me go right in there, Mrs. Clair!"

He had reached the door by the time she had opened it, and got through.

"I'll be with you in a moment again," added he, turning round very patronizingly upon her.

So she consented to take the hint, and to remain passively where she was.

"Some one's coming!" whispered Kitty and her lover, in the same breath, as the old gentleman laid his hand on the latch of their door. "In there! in that closet!" cried Kitty, rising and crowding the young man into as small and dark a hole as ever could have been made for a closet. "Quick! quick!" and it was all over. Robert was to be seen nowhere.

Mr. Brimmer entered the room, and found Kitty standing in the middle of the floor.

"Good evening to you, pretty Miss Kitty!" saluted he, advancing and taking her hand.

Her face was deeply flushed with excitement, from having been obliged to pack away her lover in such haste. Mr. Brimmer saw it, and charged it all to her modesty. It was easier for him to do so, for it flattered himself.

Now, as I have already taken occasion to observe, Mr. Brimmer, lover though he probably called himself, was a much better man of business. He had never before tried to make love to a woman, and it would place him in a false position to say that he knew how. He carried no rules about him but those of trade; and the first and last of them was, "Never stop for ceremony; but push ahead!"

So down he dropped before the bewildered Miss Kitty upon his knees, jarring the floor till the little windows shook in the casements.

The jealous as well as inquisitive widow had her ear at the door; and the hidden lover in the closet had both his ear and his shoulder in a position exactly similar.

"Miss Kitty Clair," said the bachelor, rolling up his eyes finely at her, and half crossing his hands over his capacious chest, "I *love* you, Kitty! I *adore* you! I must make you *my wife*, Kitty!"

Kitty would have started back; but farther than the wall she could not go. She would have screamed; but that she dared not do. She had the greatest respect in the world for that respectable old bachelor, Mr. Brimmer, and could not for the life of her think what *she* had done that he should be down on his knees before her. She felt like crying for very fright.

"I have so long wanted to unburden my heart to you!" said he, pressing his hand hard against the region where that organ is supposed to be. "I have loved you long, Kitty! Indeed, Kitty—but don't be cruel to me *now*! Be my wife, Kitty! be my wife! You shall share the whole of my fortune; and your good mother shall be made happy, too! I am *rich*, you know! I have a great deal of money! Only say you will be my wife, and all my money shall be yours! Say the word, Kitty! Not till you say you will be my wife will I get up from this place!"

Kitty could say nothing. She wished from her heart the floor would open and swallow her up, or that some one would lift her suddenly out of sight through the ceiling.

"I came this evening, Kitty," resumed the persistent swain on his knees, "expressly to ——"

The closet door, too heavily borne upon by the hidden lover, suddenly gave way! and Mr. Robert Gray came pitching sprawlingly forward, exactly before the face and eyes of Mr. Brimmer!

Kitty could not help it, and set up a loud scream; and what did the doughty Mr. Brimmer do but scream likewise!

The entry door opened at this very inopportune moment, and in bounced the widow, her face as red as if she had been broiling steaks over a very warm fire.

There still knelt the bachelor, his hands firmly laid across his breast in his fright, as in the act of laying vigorous siege to Miss Kitty's heart! and there sprawled the prohibited young lover, caught at last in the entangling meshes he had little thought woven for him!

And the widow, too—she *saw* it all! If she could have felt angry at the presence of Kitty's interdicted lover, she must have been no less so at seeing Mr. Brimmer in his present predicament.

"What's the matter!" exclaimed both the widow and Mr. Brimmer at the same time.

But Mrs. Clair saw what the matter was in a moment; and she had the ready tact to turn it all to advantage, too. So she set up a loud and musical laugh at the bachelor, clapping her hands.

Kitty saw how things were turning; and so she laughed too.

And Robert felt unusually delighted to think he was not himself at once turned out of doors, and picked himself up hurriedly from the floor, and laughed likewise.

And so there was a perfect shout of laughter—and all about Mr. Brimmer.

"Making love to Kitty!" exclaimed the widow; "and her lover in the room to hear you! Ha! ha! ha!"

Robert felt willing to do any thing, short of breaking his neck, at this juncture, in return for so friendly an announcement from Kitty's own mother.

Mr. Brimmer picked himself up slowly, and rubbed his knees, and looked wildly about him, as if he had lost something.

"Is this—is this——" and here he stopped short.

"It's Kitty's *lover*!" exclaimed the widow, laughing again.

And then all three laughed once more in unison.

Mr. Brimmer laughed himself. And then he thought he would tell them all just how it was, and how badly he wanted a wife; and he was willing to take the widow herself—if she would but keep this adventure of his a secret!

So the widow Clair shortly after became Mrs. Brimmer, and moved over into the bachelor's large house; and Kitty became in time Mrs. Gray, and continued living at the brown cottage. But Mr. Brimmer insists that his eyesight was poor, and that all the time he *meant* to marry the widow, even when he was down on his knees before Kitty!

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### A DOUBLE SURPRISE.

MILLY sometimes loved to go off alone on her rambles, as if solitude were sweet to her young heart.

She had not seen her old friend Daisy in some time. But as she happened now to have strolled away again by herself, she found her sitting under the shade of a great oak in the edge of the meadow, engaged in joining together the stems of the wild flowers she had gathered in her lap.

Daisy started up on hearing an approaching footstep, and looked all around her.

"Ah! you've found me again!" exclaimed she, as soon as she discovered who it was. "Where've you been this good while?"

Milly told her, "Nowhere."

"That's a pleasant place!" returned the little outlaw. "I'm sure, I'd jest as lief live up on the mountain! But why don't you come over here *more*?"

"Do *you* come here often?" asked Milly.

"Pretty often; sometimes two or three times a week."

"You do!"

"If you'd only come before, you'd seen me a good many times. I've *missed* you."

Milly sat down beside her in the welcome shade, and watched her while she resumed her pleasant labor.

"What do you do that for?" she asked.

"O, jest for fun. Do *you* ever do any thing for fun?"

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She couldn't exactly say. Poor child! little had been the room for *fun* in a life so thick with changes as hers!

"Do you wear them round your neck?" continued she.

"Sometimes; I put 'em on sometimes Sundays; and then old Jarvie seems to think I look *so* pretty!"

Milly thought she certainly ought to.

"Where do you find all these *pretty* flowers? I never see them in the meadows."

"No; *they* grow in the woods. I bring 'em down with me as I come along; and then, you see, I mix 'em in with the medder flowers. What's that?" she suddenly exclaimed, lowering her voice to an ominous whisper.

"What?" asked Milly.

"Didn't you hear somebody a-steppin'? I did."

"No," answered the other.

Just then Daisy rose to her feet, and looked round behind her.

"There! who's that?" exclaimed she, in a suppressed voice.

Milly looked round too. As she caught sight of the advancing figure, she gave utterance to a cry, half of gladness, and half of astonishment.

A man came rapidly towards her, holding out both arms. He was much attenuated, and seemed extremely worn with travel. His face was faintly illumined with a smile, which grew brighter and broader as he came nearer her.

The intruder was Adam Drowne—old Adam Drowne, the wanderer, late of the Byeboro' poorhouse.

Milly could hardly speak, so much overcome was she. He, however, seized one of her hands with both his

own, and began to give utterance to his questions and exclamations in the most voluble style.

"How did you get *here*? Where did you come from? O, how *glad* I am to find you once more!" Another squeeze of her hand. "What ever separated us? I was so careless, too! Poor Milly! what *did* she think of it? Did she think I was trying to run away from her? But how *fresh* you are! so much better than you was over to Byeboro'! Do you *live* here? Do you know any body here? How *did* you find the way? Poor Milly! you don't *know* how much I missed you!"

Daisy listened and looked on with profound astonishment. It passed her comprehension to understand how it was Milly ever knew such a man as that.

But old Adam broke in upon her reveries immediately.

"Do *you* live with her, too? Are you her *sister*? You look something alike, though."

Daisy told him that they did not live together, and that, though they might not be *sisters* exactly, she thought she loved Milly as much already as if she *were* her sister.

Adam asked her then where she lived.

She pointed in the direction of the mountain, and said, "Up there."

"And where do *you* live, Milly?" persisted he, looking very earnestly into her innocent face.

"'Way, 'way over back here," she answered, looking over her shoulder in the direction of Dovecote.

Then he sat down near the girls, and began, in his way, to tell Milly by what mischance it was he lost her at the landing, and how deeply he had lamented her

loss every day since. He told her how steadily he had kept wandering, from that time to this, in the hope of somewhere meeting with her again; and here, in this most unexpected of spots, he had finally found her!

They sat and talked for some time, and began at length to feel better acquainted on all sides. Daisy finally proposed to take Milly up to the hut again, and told Adam that he might come along too, if he liked. So they went up together.

It had been a long time since Milly was there; and she very naturally fell into enthusiastic encomiums of the place for the benefit solely of her old friend Adam. He gave good ear to all the child had to say, apparently much interested in her fresh descriptions.

Adam seemed charmed with the views he got from the many resting-places by the way, standing and gazing in silent delight.

"*That's* where I live!" finally exclaimed Milly, pointing off over the landscape. "*That's* Dovecote!"

Adam looked with all his eyes.

At last he exclaimed, in a low tone,—

"A pleasant place, Milly! Do you want to stay there?"

"O, always!" answered the child. "I love my friends there very much."

"It's some such place as that I was after for you," said he, "when we left Byeboro'. I'm glad you've found it."

For several minutes he stood regarding the spot. His eyes roved about the roofs and the grounds, and he appeared to be measuring the ample acres that stretched away in the rear.

"A good home, child!" he mused.

They started on again. After a long climb, and after

Milly had become very weary with her exertions, and had declined again and again Adam's urgent offers to carry her on a little way, they reached the desired spot. Adam looked closely at every object about him, though he ventured to ask no questions.

Daisy conducted them in. Adam sat down upon the bench, while the cat stuck up her back, and waited only for Daisy to give the signal for her to tear his eyes out.

They had been seated but a few minutes, when a shadow fell across the door; and all eyes were intent to catch a view of the new comer.

Jarvie entered, and looked about him.

The moment his eyes fell upon the face of old Adam, his expression grew very strange, and his lips became almost white. There was perfect silence for at least a minute. Adam's countenance fell greatly, and his hands trembled with the new excitement.

"Adam Drowne!" exclaimed Jarvie, dwelling deliberately on every syllable.

No answer, however, from the intruder.

"Why are you here?" said Jarvie, after another pause "Why do you follow me round in this way?"

"I knew nothing that *you* lived here," answered Adam. "I didn't think of seeing *you*."

His eyes now fixed themselves upon the face of Daisy. There was some expression there, hidden or half brought out, that riveted his gaze. Now for the first time, too, he thought he detected some faint resemblance between her lineaments and those of Milly; and the longer he looked, the more palpable the thought grew. A new emotion sprang up within him, which it took quite all his energy to control.

Jarvie, on his part, studied Adam's features with the

strangest interest. A dark frown settled on his forehead, and the muscles about his mouth moved convulsively.

They had met before—these two strange beings. They were well known each to the other. This was but the old acquaintance renewed.

The girls regarded both of them in wonder. Milly was astonished to know that Adam had thus found a second acquaintance in finding her; and Daisy looked still more so to see a sight of which she would never have dreamed.

Adam kept his seat on the bench, while Jarvie moved not from the position he had taken in the middle of the floor.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### OLD TOPICS REVIVED.

"How come you 'way up here?" broke out Jarvie Thatch again. "I never'd thought *thunder'd* found me up here! How did you git up?"

Adam only pointed significantly to the children.

"They brought ye?"

He nodded assent.

"But how did ye find *them*? *Where* did ye?"

"Yonder in the meadow," answered Adam, in a very low voice.

"In the medder? What was *you* doin' in the medder, Daisy? It's too fur from home, by all odds. The cat ain't enough to keep house alone, neither. You mustn't go so *fur*, Daisy."

"La! it was only a little bit of a run down the mountain," returned she. "I can go it in two minutes."

"Where's Mary?" inquired Adam of Jarvie, in a tone betokening the deepest melancholy.

"Say nothing about her to me," answered Jarvie; "say nothing about her!"

"Is she here? Does she live with you now?" persisted he, regardless of the injunction.

Jarvie shook his head, and looked down to the floor. His entire manner suddenly changed.

"I'd like to see Mary again, if you'd let me," said Adam. "She was very dear to me, you know. Mary! Mary! ah, yes, indeed, do I remember her! She was

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the only idol *my* heart ever set up. She *loved* me once, too, I verily believe."

"*Will* you stop this?" demanded Jarvie, in a very much louder voice.

"I wish I could see Mary again. I really wish I could. I guess she'd be glad enough to see me *now*. Why can't I see her? Why won't you tell me where she is?"

Jarvie stood and looked all sorts of threatenings at him. But he heeded them not at all. He kept on with his talk.

"When you turned me away before, I felt that she loved me. I know she does now."

"I never turned you away! She did it herself, if 'twas done at all!"

"Poor Mary! poor Mary!" groaned out Adam. "She was the one I loved so much! She was the girl that all the rest of 'em envied!" He kept his eyes intently fixed on Daisy, while he spoke of the old object of his idolatry. "How I loved her no one'll ever know! She was a dear, a *dear* good creature!"

"I wish you'd stop," said Jarvie.

Adam looked quickly up at him, and saw the tears swimming in his eyes. It struck a strange sensation to his heart.

"Where *is* Mary?" he asked, more rapidly. "Where is she? Tell me, and let me go find her! I haven't seen her in *so long*!"

"You'll never see her agin!" said Jarvie, shaking his head dolefully. "You'll never see her agin!"

"What!" exclaimed he, in a hollow voice. "Dead?"

His countenance visibly betrayed his emotion.

"Dead!" repeated Jarvie, for his answer. "But worse than dead before she went!"

"O Heaven!" cried the forlorn lover, beating his temple with the palm of his hand. "Dead!—*dead!* Does it seem so to me to-day? What have *I* been living for all this time? Why did *I* wait so long? Why haven't *I* gone, too? Dead!—*dead!* Poor—*poor* Mary!"

He sat, for some moments after, wrapped in the solemn drapery of his own thoughts. His head was bent forward, and his eyes brooded on the floor. The whole apartment was hushed in silence. Even Jarvie Thatch himself acknowledged the secret influence of the moment.

Daisy looked surprisedly around upon all, and Milly little less so. This was a scene neither had been prepared to greet. They exchanged glances occasionally, as if to communicate their perfect inability to comprehend the meaning of it all.

At length Adam broke forth again.

"Then Mary's dead! I hope she died happy."

"She died wretched," said Jarvie; "*very* wretched!"

"What made her?" pursued Adam.

"Then you don't know of it?"

"Not a word; not a syllable."

"When she turned *you* off——"

"O that she had never left me for another!" interrupted Adam, in an agony. "She missed it; I *know* she missed it!"

"She saw another person."

"Just as I guessed! *That* was what did it!"

"He was a man that we thought loved her; at any rate, there's little mistake that she loved him."

"Poor—*poor* Mary!"

"He said he would marry her——"

"And *did* he? Yes, *that's* what I want to know! *Did* he?"

"He *never* did," answered Jarvie.

"So I thought," said Adam, sorrowfully. "So I thought. I guess I know the rest."

"It was a terrible thing for me; but I——"

"O, but you should have let her *had me!* It wouldn't have come to this, then!"

"She couldn't *have* you!" spoke Jarvie, with much decisiveness. "It wasn't *to be!*"

"She would, if she had known," said Adam, equally prompt. "But she's gone!"

"No," continued Jarvie, "she never married at all. When this man deserted her, her heart seemed to break. She gave all up, and with her last breath she told me to care for the little one she left behind. *That's* the one," added he, nodding slightly in the direction of Daisy, and speaking in a lower tone.

Adam looked at her again with increased interest. His eyes seemed to pierce her through.

"So I thought!" exclaimed he, in a low voice, as to himself. "So I said to myself, the very first minute I laid eyes on her."

"She's a dear, *good* child," said Jarvie.

"If she's like her mother, she's a darling," added the other. "She has got her look, too."

Jarvie shook his head again; and again Adam sighed, "Poor Mary! she's gone, then!"

There was another period of silence.

"You've come here for nothin', have ye?" asked old Jarvie again, looking suddenly up in his face.

"I didn't expect to see *you* here."

"Wal, do ye want any thing more?"

"I should ha' been *so* glad to see Mary—poor Mary; but I can't. She's dead! poor, dear Mary!"

"She never cared for *you* any," said Jarvie. "'Twas all on your side."

"Umph!" ejaculated Adam. "Mary *loved* me; I know she did! She got deceived in this one; *that* was it!"

"Have it so, then. I happen to know best." The eyes of the two men met, and their looks kindled much. "At any rate," continued Jarvie, "you ain't in my way as you used to be. *She's* gone now, poor girl!"

"Yes, she's gone! Did she leave any word for me, though?"

The man's foolishness seemed all to come back to him with the question. He became the demented, half-idiot being he had for so many years been considered by every one who knew him.

"Not a syllable," answered the other to his question.

He mused a moment.

"Didn't she speak my name?"

"Not so much as your name."

"Poor Mary! she was played a false part with! I would I could find the one that did so cruel a wrong!"

"You *can't*, though. You'll never do *that*, Adam."

"Why not?"

"Because you can't!" repeated Jarvie, with additional emphasis. "That business is all left for *me*. It's all *my own*! Nobody shall take it away from me!"

Adam relapsed into another fit of silence, holding down his head upon his hands, and fixing his eyes on the floor. Jarvie left him in this attitude, and went about the little business he had in hand.

It was just the time, too, for Daisy to steal out; which she accordingly did, conducting Milly along with her. They began to move off down the mountain again.

In a half hour, Milly was in her own dear, delightful home.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## THE RUSTIC BRIDGE.

OVER by a back road, perhaps a half mile or more from the old homestead, a rude bridge leaped the stream where it began to debouch into a glassy little basin, and flung down its black shadows into the water.

It was no great of a bridge, as people would be apt to say; that is, you would find no architectural skill developed in its construction, further than what was common to plain, country bridge builders. There was no turreted parapet to it; only a simple rail, spiked down to rude uprights of half-hewn logs. It had no approved curvature or span that would be likely to catch the eyes of passers; and there certainly could be little for them to see in its gaping chinks, through which the dust and sand rattled down, except the shadowed and sullen water below, swirling softly round the smooth and slimy logs, and rippling noiselessly through a growth of coarse sedge that fringed the bank just beyond.

Yet it was strikingly picturesque, as all such objects are apt to be. On one side, you could see the little stream come creeping out from the dense shrubbery that crowded down to its banks, like a shy Naiad just coming out from the seclusion of her woodland home. On the other, the current wound, and circled, and twisted — like a huge serpent writhing in the grass — down through the open meadow, between high clumps of coarse grass that rolled pleasantly in the lazy tide of

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the summer wind, and among low and stunted osiers, where little birds built their nests, and green frogs plumped, with a shrill cry of alarm, into the water.

I loved to stand upon the little bridge of a clear morning in spring, lolling lazily against the railing, and watching the bobbing of my fishing floats upon the water. It filled my heart with heaven to hear the melody of the birds in the willows above the bridge, chattering together in their little colonies, skimming the water for insects, or rocking on the tips of the long-speared grasses.

On such mornings, it seemed as if life were a pleasure for only its own sake — as if the very thought of existence were enough to intoxicate one with joy. There was that balm and vigor in the atmosphere, filled with odors from flower banks on a thousand hillsides and in a thousand meadows; there was such a genial glow in the warmth of the sunshine, flooding river, and valley, and plain; there was such a constantly titillating feeling in the veins, as the morning airs braced them, and the morning sun stirred them afresh with its contagious heat; there was that rich bound to the heart, filled full with its ripe impulses, and going out freely to meet every new-born influence.

Fish of different kinds darted swiftly between the narrow and blackened piers, or played leisurely about the water-soaked logs, or sculled their steady way across the stream to some well-known haunt beneath the scooped-out embankment. I could see the young pickerel, with their piratical-looking jaws, just learning themselves to bear down boldly on small craft weaker than they; and little minnows, driving along in shoals to intercept some waif that was floating down with the stream, as if to hail it respecting its course; and slimy

suckers, with great pouting mouths, and black backs with white bellies, drifting from one position in the mud and sand to another; and golden-hued roach, active and anxious always — now here, now there, and again rising to the surface for a taste of what looked palatable; and perch, and bream, and all other such fish as haunt quiet and sedgy country waters.

Many and many a morning have I filled my little creel, made rudely of osiers, with fresh captives from the stream near this rustic bridge. There were all sorts and sizes messed strangely together there — white and black, yellow and brown, and red, all united their colors; and I know too well that my heart could not have swelled with half the pride, had I held up that same basket filled with gold before the delighted eyes of my mother. I never failed to get a word of commendation for my skill. I thought nothing of the *patience*, then. I charged every thing to skill only.

There were beds of lilies, too, fringing the stream; and a picture could in no wise have been made more charming on canvas than this. They looked like a dainty ruffle for the little river, white and yellow sweetly intermingled. Their broad, leathery leaves lay spread out upon the surface of the water, and beneath their sufficient shadows pickerel were wont to lurk, and lazy suckers to doze away the long days. Gaudy flies went skimming about them, now alighting a moment to rock so gently on the wave, and then cleaving the sunlit air again with their painted wings. I could see the shapes of the shadows, as the leaves threw them down on the bed of the river, blotching it after the most fantastic devices.

Swift swallows went careering up and down the surface of the stream, scouring the open meadow below,

and wheeling back under the bridge to hide themselves in the thick bushes above. The air was sometimes filled with their shrill twitterings. Even such ethereal things as butterflies, of the daintiest colors known, would straggle away on careless wing to the dark arch, and hover coquettishly about the dank and decaying beams, filling my young heart with pictures of the strangest contrasts imaginable.

Whenever a wagon crossed the bridge, the rattling of the horses' hoofs loosened the timbers and sent down streaks of sand and gravel into the black water beneath; and I could see the little fish darting away in every direction from sudden fright, and long afterward coming together again to take counsel of their danger. Over this same rustic structure went loads of fragrant hay, in its season, with glad boys tossing each other about on the tops, and the oxen crouching and bending under the weight of the yoke. Across this bridge, too, trundled farmers' wagons, laden with produce of all kinds for the distant market, and creaking with the weight of their burdens. Rosy-cheeked girls rolled over it on their way to the village church; or slid across it to some distant rendezvous in the brisk sleighing time, muffled in robes and furs. It was, indeed, a bridge that none could reasonably find fault with, for there was not one whom it did not carry safely over.

By the hour one could dream the pleasantest dreams, leaning on its rail and looking over the landscape. Quiet thoughts seemed to flock there, perhaps sailing and drifting thither on the swimming flood. They eddied round the sunken logs and timbers, just as the water circled them in its soft embrace. Naiads dwelt all up and down the meadows, and each had a charming nook within the long, tufted grass and the waving wil-

lows. Visions of life, of the great world beyond my reach, swam in the clear water, like rare pictures set in crystal frames. Hopes danced gayly up and down the brimming stream, sweeping, in their flashing apparel, across my busy brain.

It was at the old bridge that I have lived many of my pleasantest hours. But it has sunk down to its rest in the water now, and a new one, with looks of far greater pretension, has usurped its place. Time and tide together were too much for so rude a structure.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### MISS NANCY IN TOWN.

It was a delicious summer morning when the old brown horse drove up before the door, and Miss Nancy climbed into the wagon after her trunk. She was going to take the stage at the village inn.

Milly's eyes were swimming with tears. She half wanted to go, and still she could not seriously think of leaving this spot, where she found so much happiness. As her old friend rode away, still looking tenderly behind her, the child burst into tears in good earnest. It took quite all our exertions, as well as our sympathies, to pacify her.

When Miss Nancy arrived in town, she went to visit her old and particular friend Mrs. Trevor. She was a widow lady, with no children, whose husband had left her in possession of a large property. Her residence was exceedingly pleasant; and all she seemed now to desire was the visits of her friends.

Miss Nancy Gregory and she were old schoolmates, and from early days had been much attached to one another. A standing invitation was continually urging the former to make the house of the latter her home for as large a part of the year as she would; yet an annual visit was about all she attempted usually, her relationship with Dovecote being in every sense so close and delightful an one. This was the occasion of one of her visits.

She had been at Mrs. Trevor's some time already, when the latter one day proposed to her to go and see a poor woman with whom she had left some sewing.

"She interests me so much," added Mrs. Trevor, "that I feel you will be repaid for your walk. She has a couple of daughters, too—very pretty girls, but apparently not habituated to such a life as they are obliged to lead."

Miss Nancy signified at once her desire to accompany her, and they set forth.

Their way took them into some very retired streets, where few people, and those apparently of the poorer classes, were to be seen passing. These streets were quite narrow, and contained high and narrow houses, into which families were packed by the layer. Beautiful as the sky looked from the thoroughfare, it became dismal when seen from between these high rows of dwellings.

"It seems to be a very peculiar case," remarked Mrs. Trevor, as they walked on. "I haven't met with any like it recently."

"A widow?" inquired Miss Nancy.

"Yes; so she said."

"Know any thing of her previous circumstances?"

"Nothing at all, except what she is disposed to hint; and that is but little indeed. But she has seen trouble, and of the deepest character; that is evident."

They came to a darkened entry way at length, through which they passed, and proceeded up a single flight of steps.

"This is her door," said Mrs. Trevor, and knocked.

It was opened after a moment's delay, during which there could be heard an unusual bustle within; and a woman stood before them.

"Good morning!" saluted Mrs. Trevor, lighting up the very passage with her smile. "I have come to see you about that last piece of work you took from me."

The woman received her without a syllable of welcome, opening the door wider to allow both to pass.

She was no other than Mrs. Trevelyn, the old-time acquaintance of Milly herself.

Miss Nancy, however, knew nothing of it, nor was she now supposed to be in any better way of learning so interesting a fact. The unhappy woman had buried herself from the notice of the world, and hidden even her name under a fiction. She had cast off all that belonged to her in her better condition.

The apartment was small, and but scantily furnished. There was a strip of cheap carpet covering a part of the floor, and a few plain chairs stood round against the walls. Two beds were in a little room just beyond, and on the floor of this there was no carpet at all. Every object betokened poverty—poverty that pinched and tyrannized.

A small stand was drawn near the middle of the floor, and a low rocking chair stood next it, from which the woman had apparently risen to admit her visitors. She regarded Miss Nancy with a close and scrutinizing look for a moment, and then her eyes wandered away. If the latter could but have known her name, with what a surprise might she not have overwhelmed her!

In the room likewise sat a couple of girls. They were very young in their appearance, and grief and trouble had already marked their countenances deeply. One was trying to hem a handkerchief,—probably some work her mother had taken in,—and the other sat looking towards the window, her hands folded in her lap. The expression of her face was sorrowful in the extreme.

Mrs. Trevor sat down, and so did Miss Nancy.

"I didn't want you to hurry so much about those plain dresses," said the former to the unhappy stitcher: "I find there's no great need of it. You can, therefore, take your own time about it."

"Then I am glad," returned the woman. "I've had more to do lately than I *can* do. I don't know what's to come. And yet, with all my work, I hardly keep along."

"Then you shall have more for what you do for *me*."

The woman looked up in her face, and tried to smile.

"You are very kind already," said she, in a broken voice.

"But you mustn't *want*, you know."

"I do not mean to, as long as I can work. But I am obliged to keep very close to it. Sometimes I half despair, the future looks so dark to me; but not so gloomy as the past."

The last remark seemed momentarily to throw her into a reverie.

"Your history is full of interest," said Mrs. Trevor. "I know it."

The woman looked up at her in surprise.

"Interest to nobody but myself *now*," replied she, with a slow shake of her head; "nobody but myself."

"You should be sure of that before you say it. I think I can sympathize with you in all your suffering."

"I do not want proof of that, my dear madam," was the answer. "If I did, I don't know where else I could go."

"Then why not allow me to share your troubles with you?"

"How *can* I? How can any one divide his grief?"

"But I might be of some assistance, little though it is. I might give advice."

The woman said nothing.

"You have been in better circumstances?" said Mrs. Trevor, trying to draw her out.

"Ah, yes! But that is past. I would not think of that now."

"By what accident of fortune was it that you were first brought to your present condition? I know it was something hard to bear. Your look betrays that much."

She only sighed, and shook her head, falling the more intently to her work. The countenance of the girl who was engaged in looking out the window perceptibly fell, and the shadow of her grief seemed greater than it was a moment before.

"At least," continued Mrs. Trevor, "I should like very much to help you."

"You are kind already," answered the woman. "I esteem you as one of the best of the few friends I have."

"What I have done is but small by the side of what I wish to do. I see that you are struggling with more than you can ever hope to conquer."

"I sometimes think it is so myself," said she.

"But would you not, then, be willing to part with some of your present burden?—with the care of one of——"

"Give up my children?" interrupted she, quickly, and looking alarmed at the very approach of such a thought.

"If you knew they were going to be provided with good homes," said Mrs. Trevor, "where you could yourself go to see them?"

"They are my only comfort now," replied the woman.

"And the greatest cause of your anxiety, too?"

"Yes, I must confess it."

"Then have them placed where they will have all the advantages of a home."

"Could you *tell* me of such a situation?" she inquired.

"Perhaps so. What would you do, if I should?"

"I might think of it, possibly. I should regard your kindness and judgment as much almost as I should my own. But to separate them!"

"The world will do that, by and by, for you, when you may not have a chance of a choice," replied Mrs. Trevor.

No definite arrangement was, however, concerted then. The matter had been broken, and that, to the charitable feelings of Mrs. Trevor, was something towards her wish.

Miss Nancy went home that day with her friend, impressed more sorrowfully than ever with the changes that set about us here and there, like whirlpools in the glassy current of a river.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### THE CLOUD IN THE SKY.

It was holiday with us all. The school house was deserted.

We woke in the morning in much higher spirits than usual, and the first thing we did was to exchange congratulations on the coming of a whole play day.

As we went down stairs, and trooped off over the garden, our hearts were refreshed with the sight of the dewy morning and the red-risen sun. It was a summer morning, bright and beautiful. The air was bland and fragrant, and invigorated our lungs as we took it in. We wandered among the flowers and bushes until breakfast time, and then went in to fill out the pleasant board.

I thought my grandmother had never greeted us all with such a pleasant smile, taking us by the hand, and asking us how far we had run. Her cap was white and smooth, and the little kerchief was crossed in that same neat style across her throat.

The breakfast hour, too, seemed — as I recall it now — one of the most delightful of those that were always full of delight. We talked more than was our wont, our spirits towering as the sun went up in the sky. The whole day was before us: who so animated as children with such a pleasant prospect?

"Well, children," said my mother, as we began to

show signs of uneasiness at continued confinement at table, "what is going to be done to-day?"

"We want to go after flowers over in the meadows!" at once replied Alice, speaking only for the girls.

"And *we* are going a-fishing," said two or three of the boys at the same time.

My mother protested that both these methods of diversion would take us all too far from home; and my grandmother joined in with her, saying that she feared something would happen to us if we went so far away.

But children have a way of their own of persisting in their plans, especially if they have the least ground of hope for success; and we persisted that morning in ours.

I laid my head against my father's shoulder, and silently pleaded for the permission our side wanted; and Carrie leaned against her mother, and told her that the meadows, where the buttercups and daisies grew, were but a little way off, and that she would take care of Nelly that no hurt should come nigh her.

We were, between us, successful in our petitions. A compromise was effected, so that we, whose pastime was to be fishing, should see to those whose employment would be flower gathering. And thus the two pleasures were made up, by my mother's happy suggestions, into one. And boys and girls trooped off together—the latter with their light baskets on their arms, and the former with fishing rods across their shoulders.

As we trudged along, climbing the stiles and the stone walls, and helping over the little ones after us, the clear air of the morning rung with the overflow of our joy. We shouted at the frizzle-fronted oxen that stared sullenly at us as we passed, and set the calves and

lambs to frisking on the grass, and threw stones quite out of sight into the deep-blue sky.

The girls chatted gayly and volubly of what they were going to do, of how many flowers they were going to gather, and of what beautiful bunches of posies they would make up to give to their mother and grandmother; and stooped down here and there, as they went along, to pick up bits of stone that glistened in the sun, and throw them into their baskets.

We rigged our fishing tackle as we went on, boasting in advance of our exploits, and already counting the finny victims to our skill. One of us said that what fish *he* caught should be cooked in one way, and another stuck out as stoutly for another way for *his*; and so we tramped over the rolling lands, and across the plains, and down through the valleys, till we reached the fishing ground and the flower meads together.

The girls were for a time to take care of themselves, we all the while promising to keep them in our sight. They fell to flower gathering, therefore, at once, and told us not to wander too far away, so that they could not hear us answer when they called. We bound ourselves altogether by their wishes, and hurried to the bank of the little creek to bait our hooks, and wet our lines, and watch the bobbing of our floats as the small fry nibbled at the worms, and draw out the silly victims on the grass.

The pleasure is a seductive one, even to a right-hearted man. What, then, must it not be to a boy, his heart fired with impulses and burning with a constant excitement?

As we fished, and as luck gathered round our hooks, we thoughtlessly strolled down the bank, separating from each other, and losing sight even of our sisters.

They, too, were quite as much taken up as ourselves, and seemed to have felt no degree of loneliness or fear.

Each one of us watched his hook. The perch darted up to it, took a prudent hold, and then let it drop and ran away again. Yellow-bellied roach made for it ravenously, and chewed and spit it out very much according to their varying taste and pleasure. And little minnows played foolishly about it, occasionally worrying off a fragment of the worm, but never managing to get so much as the barb within their jaws.

The morning air was never so delicious, and the shining sun made the stream glisten like a surface of burnished silver. And on either side of this grew brush and brake, fringing the banks with a true beauty; and lily pads, and coarse, blue tulips, and long and reedy rushes.

In the very music of the little waves, as they rippled and dashed along, — curling here under an embankment of sand, and rattling there over an opposing bar of stones, — there was something strangely charming. We ceased thinking of each other; this lulling harmony drove all our thoughts inward. We had even forgot our little sisters among the violets and daisies.

Presently Ben came running up towards me, all out of breath.

I at once held up my string of fish before him, and cried, in my joy, "See there! see there!"

But he saw nothing of that. There was a fearful cloud on his countenance that cast its own dull shadow over mine. I *could not* ask him what was the matter; I only looked him mutely in the face, and trembled at the fear that seemed to possess him.

"Jimmy! Jimmy!" This was all he could say.

It was enough, however, to set fire to the train of my

fears, and I looked down the stream and over the meadow to catch sight of him.

I saw him nowhere! He was the youngest boy of us, hardly turned of five, and we loved him like our own hearts.

"Where is he?" I exclaimed, as soon as words found their way to my lips.

"Jimmy! Jimmy!" was all he could utter. And he started across the meadow, in fright, for home.

I threw down my fishing rod, fish and all, upon the grass, and set out in a breathless run down the bank of the stream. To the south it grew broader and deeper, till it debouched, in the lower meadows, into a creek of large and fearful pretensions. I flew to this broad basin, and looked at the sullen water.

There was a little straw hat floating on the surface; and that was all!

I ran up and down the bank in deepest distress. I could not cry out, my emotions so stifled my utterance. I knew not what I did, so lost was I to all thoughts of time and place. And with my own heart, too, palsied with fear, I followed on after my brother towards home, leaving the girls at their flower gathering, still, in the meadow.

The sound of the waters was in my ears every rood I ran. I heard them still dashing against the stones, and swashing mournfully against the banks. They seemed, as when Undine went down in the deep Danube, to be yet "whispering and sobbing" around the spot where little Jimmy disappeared, and to say distinctly, still, "O, woe, woe!"

It is all a blank. I can remember nothing. I knew not, then, where I threw my fishing rod and fish, or even how I reached home, or what I said.

Alarm seized every one. Every one was in distress and tears. There was running to and fro, and confusion without end. One hardly spoke to another, so heavily pressed down the fear upon the hearts of all. They ran to the doors, and from the doors, and through the rooms.

It was hardly yet noon when the dead boy was brought home and laid upon the bed. Well do I remember, now, how he looked, as I stood at the bedside. His eyes were shut, and his little lips compressed. One of his hands still remained tightly closed, as if he had clutched at some vain hope of safety. Over his beautiful forehead—now white and cold—straggled his tangled brown curls, and down about his neck, and upon his little linen collar.

Dead!—dead!—dead!

There is a little mound in the village graveyard, still heaped as it was heaped and rounded at his burial. A thorn bush is growing near it.

I go back often, now, to that quiet grave, and think of the weeping mothers and children that flocked about it on the sad afternoon of the funeral. His little hand is still lying across his breast, and the brown, silken curls are combed back from his full forehead, just as I saw them many and many a year ago. Poor Jimmy! you went before us; but we are fast following after!

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### A TUMBLE IN THE HAY.

WHAT pleasure there is in the summer hayfields, none but they who love to romp over the sward, or tumble among the tented haycocks, or toss the fragrant grass with the shining tines, can presume to know.

In this world, there are people who regale themselves quite as much on a distant contemplation of rural delights as they could on the actual enjoyment of them. Such might relish a faint fragrance from the new-mown hay, or a brief glimpse of a line of rakers beside the stone wall, or a sight of the conical haycocks dotting the field; and such may possibly find all in this little wisp, so hastily caught up behind the haymakers.

Marching down through the field in a row, the mowers swing their hungry scythes, bringing down long rows of standing grass and daisies. Now and then all stop to whet the scythes with their rifles; or to wipe the perspiration from their imbrowned faces; or to drink sweetened water, seasoned with ginger, from the capacious tin pail; and then fall in a line to their work again.

The swaths lie about them thickly, as on they go, bringing down the tall spears with a noise that reminds you of the crisp tearing of grass by a grazing cow of Devon. There is a faint ring in their remorseless blades while yet they swing them backward for the next fatal sweep. Here and there they lay open to the

sunlight the hidden nooks of birds, their fledglings still squatted in the nests, or trace the burrowings of mice and moles, that had never thought of their retirement being invaded.

Some of the stalwart men sing as their long scythes swing, making a sort of rustic rhyme to their occupation. The sun climbs up in the sky apace, and the heat rises now over the plain. The mowers occasionally throw their eyes across the broad reach of ground they are to go over, and some of them already feel oncoming weariness; yet they persistently bend to their task, and the serried ranks of daisies and grass spears keep bowing and falling to the ground.

Along behind them come those whose work it is to toss and scatter the grass for drying. The pitchforks twinkle in the long bunches of grass as it is thrown carelessly about, and rakes describe endless circuits in the air as the swaths are some of them stirred with their handles.

Boys come tossing about the cropped grass in their arms, giving themselves up to the momentary overflow of their gladness. They bury the dogs under their burdens, and laugh loudly to witness their confusion.

It is fresh and dewy when the crop comes down, and then it lies through the heat of the day deserted by all. The field looks like a desert, the sun beating down mercilessly on the wilted verdure, the daisy heads dried and dead, the dew and the freshness all vanished. It is pleasant there only as you can find grateful shelter under a spreading tree, and catch an occasional fresh breath that comes through the green leaves. The hay is making; the grass is being cured. Nature is kindly finishing for man what she hinted to him first to begin.

When the sun begins to go down from the meridian,

and the shadows begin to lengthen, and the sunlight to fall aslant on the roofs, the barns, and the walls, all hands are piped back to the hayfield again, to rake the half-made hay. At this we love to join.

Girls, with red cheeks and glistening eyes; and boys, whose skins are scarce yet beginning to wear a healthy brown; old men, with white heads and feeble limbs; and children, just tottling across the door yard,—all start off, in joyful flocks, to rake the hay.

The men look up wisely at the sky, and shake their heads as if they would mean much more than they say, and think that it will be apt to rain yet—if the wind and the clouds should happen to come round right.

Before all bound the delighted dogs, barking at something they imagine to be wrong, and patiently waiting at the bars till the haymakers come up.

And now all fall to with a hearty good will, the girls and boys doing little else than hinder each other, and raise good-humored laughter for their awkward work. The children are under every one's feet, and carried along by every one's rake; yet still they pursue their way among the busy haymakers, carrying loose snarls of the hay in their hands, and shouting till all is confusion.

The hay rustles, as it is gleaned from the fine stubble, like the shake of maidens' silken gowns; and you think of such a comparison at once, seeing the laughing girls frolicking among the windrows.

It is gathered in long lines, crossing the entire field—these are the windrows; and next follows the rolling it up in heaps, and trimming up the heaps until they look smooth and round; and then rise the picturesque-looking haycocks, scattered all over the field, yet dotting it in only regular rows.

And such gay chattering when the making up of these little ricks was well begun! and such tumbling in the hay by the younger ones! and such fragrance every where in the air!

And the sun shines now so much more pleasantly, making the rounded haycocks throw shadows at each other; and there are such agreeable walks, as if they were in reality avenues, between the rows of stacks; and girls look so like the rustic divinities they are sometimes pictured in old books,—it all comes over you delightfully.

The whole plain seems a tented field; but it is not a field of arms. It exhibits but one of the many quiet and happy arts of peace. Men and women are strolling here and there, with long rakes across their shoulders and in their hands; and youngers are gambolling over the shorn grass, counting the rustling heaps, and playing at hide and seek among them; and dogs are barking and racing withal; and there is nothing to be found but health and happiness.

A frugal table is spread at evening, just as the summer-day shadows are creeping in at the doors and through the windows. At such a time as this, it seems the twilight of the heart, too. Dim and half-seized emotions steal over the soul, casting down nothing like shadows, yet tempering it to a sweet and genial melancholy.

O, how like faint music, scarce breathing itself on the air, is the thrill of the heartstrings at such a time in the country, as they are swept by unseen and unknown fingers! How like soft and soothing murmurs come all the earth influences to the sensitive soul, bathed in an atmosphere of revery and dreams!

The haymaking day is over; and before the red

moon comes up over the hills at the east, every being in the household will be lost in a deep and sweet slumber.

Of such were the merry hay days at Dovecote.

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## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### A WEDDING IN THE PARLOR.

It was Mary that was going to be married. She was the oldest of us all.

I shall not forget the pleasant confusion that turned our childish hearts and thoughts topsyturvy while the several preparations for so remarkable an event were going on. I cannot shut out of my recollection the continual bustle that reigned both within and without doors, every noise seeming but a sounding note of preparation.

The season was autumn — exactly that dreamy, genial time when the yellow wasps were swarming under the eaves, and bumping their foolish heads against the windows; and when the sunshine lay aslant in the old garden, gilding the withered stalks and vines, as if to make compensation for the loss of their verdure; and when the early fires were just beginning to be kindled in the house, to take away the morning and evening chills.

There were a few friends there, and they were all stowed into the parlor — by no means so spacious as a modern town parlor, yet a very neat little parlor in its way. The ladies, some of whom, I remember, patronized me to the extent of smoothing down my hair on my head as I walked round the room, sat with their bonnets on, whispering to each other, and looking sharply around. I supposed at the time they must be

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both talking of and looking at nothing but myself; but my observation since that morning has done more than I should be anxious to confess towards overthrowing such childish and innocent ideas. It is quite enough for me to add that the little parlor was a room in which few of them had been for a long time, and that there had recently been made notable improvements and changes there. The ready tact of my readers will at once fill out the hint to its proper proportions.

All the flowers that could be gathered from far and near were impressed into the service of the day. They were bound together in big bunches, and stood in vases and little pots upon the shelves, and in nosegays, which each of us carried about in our hands, making no small amount of flourish as we continually smelt of them.

There was little else, however, that I could hear, but the rustling of dresses, and the low and indistinct tone in which the conversation was every where carried on. Every thing seemed so solemn, and was done in such a solemn way! There was no inclination to laugh on any side, or even to smile. I thought that the very shining of the sun grew at length to be any thing but genial.

My mother was bustling from room to room; and she had never appeared so excited to me before. It was the first dove that had been taken from the nest! I know more of what her sorrow and excitement meant now.

Her eyes were red and swollen; and I felt that she had been weeping with Mary. Indeed, I had myself twice or thrice made unsuccessful attempts to get into the chamber where they were. Each time they bade me gently go down until they should come.

Little Alice, now in charge of Nelly, was quite as

much out of her reckoning as any of us. She rolled her eyes about upon the different persons that passed to and fro through the dining room, as if utterly bewildered. Some of us stood bravely by her side, and took hold of her little fat hand, and told her that nothing in the world should come near her to hurt her; and much more in the same strain.

My aunt was as busy as one well could be, making abundant preparations for the marriage feast that was to follow. She walked quite briskly about, and seemed to take little or no notice of any of us.

My grandmother had charge of the baby, which she trotted in her lap and talked to incessantly. Occasionally, by way of diversion,—whether for the little one or ourselves I know not,—she would toss it out into our faces, and then pull it as quickly back again. The pet lamb seemed to like the sport hugely.

At length the clergyman came. I thought that an uncommonly sober feeling penetrated every one then. He had a pleasant word for his friends who were seated in the parlor, and finally found his way out to greet my grandparents, which he did in the most cordial and unaffected manner in the world. There was some silver cord that tied his tenderer feelings to the hearts of those old people, and I thought I could detect it even then.

He went out upon the lawn just before the house with my father, and there they chatted for a long time. They were alone, and none of us knew what their talk was all about. The good man, already well along in years, seemed so happy, standing there idly in the sun! I knew he loved the old place almost as well as we did ourselves.

My mother came down at length, and Mary with her.

The clergyman, too, came in, and went into another room and sat down with them. No other person was admitted except the bridegroom, who had now been some time awaiting the appearance of his bride. They were together there for a long while. I knew that the minister was giving them some good advice; for he did not fail to give that to every body.

Presently my mother and he came out of the room together. I saw that my mother had been weeping again; and I wanted to do nothing so much as ask her what was the matter. But that was not permitted me. There was other and more serious business going forward.

We all started up and followed the clergyman into the parlor, my grandmother bringing up the rear with the baby. There we ranged ourselves about as the limited space best allowed, looking anxiously at the friends who had assembled there, and anxiously at our parents and each other. It was a new scene to us. It was an epoch in our lives to become witnesses to a real wedding.

The talking fell at once into whispers, and the whispers subsided into silence; and thus for some time we all sat there. It was becoming, indeed, painful. The clergyman sat waiting as patiently as the rest of us, and looked a little saddened. Perhaps he did not like the thought of this circle's being broken at all.

Presently we heard a rustling in the direction of the door, and all eyes were turned thither.

Mary was coming in, leaning on the arm of her betrothed husband.

How can I describe her? How can I hurry along my pen to keep up with the tumultuous movements of my feelings and my memory?

She was dressed in a brown travelling habit, with a tasteful row of buttons from her dimpled chin down to her feet. Little muslin cuffs were secured neatly about her slender wrists; and around her white and swelling throat she wore one of the prettiest collars imaginable, fastened just beneath her chin with a knotted pin of plain, burning gold. Her dark hair was parted simply across her forehead, looking glossier to me than ever before. A white rosebud was the only ornament my eyes discovered about her head, got I know not where at that season.

Her entire figure was creative of the most agreeable feelings, as she stood there so maidenly and so modestly beside him who was about to become her husband. I know not when since then my heart has been wrought upon so pleasurably. She was neither too stout nor too slender, but called up only the idea of gracefulness. I well remember thinking that some great and sudden change must have come over her, such a new mien had she that morning put on.

The clergyman rose and advanced to where they stood. First, he addressed them a few solemn words of advice, which I have no fears of having been lost upon them; then, with a new emphasis and a changed manner, he united their hands, and pronounced them "man and wife." After this came a fervent prayer from his hallowed lips, and after that the confusion of congratulation. There seemed to be one general time of kissing, and laughing, and talking, and embracing. We children got somehow strangely tangled up in the snarl, and found it at times no trifling difficulty to work our way out clearly again to where we could see the door.

There was a famous table set for the entire party, at

which every body tried to be cheerful, even to my mother. They told pleasant stories, some of them highly appropriate to the time, and circled the whole long table round with smiles and rings of laughter.

But the moment of separation came at last. The carriage was at the door, and the trunks were lashed on behind. There was a universal bidding farewell, every one standing with tears in his and her eyes, even to my good grandmother.

Mary kissed us all affectionately, entered the carriage with her husband, and rolled away down the avenue. I stood before the door and watched them till the vehicle disappeared in the winding of the distant road below.

One dove had flown out of the nest!

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### THANKSGIVING TIME.

It is the time looked forward to from the last day of summer. It always comes in the fall, and the very first day of that season ushers in early thoughts of it. The yellow autumn suns, shining so feebly against the garden walls, remind us of it. The faded peach and plum leaves keep hinting of its approach. The turning of the forest leaves, as the trees put on their gorgeous autumnal liveries, bring it almost to our very doors.

Blessed, thrice-blessed anniversary! What other day in all the year brings with it so many joys? what other day leaves so many pleasant remembrances?

The peculiar influences that surround the time settle on one's heart for many days before the expected one dawns. The notes of preparation are heard on all sides. People are driving over the country to buy up the yellow-legged fowls for the town consumption. Farmers trudge about to and from market, in old-fashioned wagons filled with prime poultry, over which are strewn cloths as white as snow. Black, and brown, and yellow legs stick out from beneath the cloths on all sides, and the boys look wistfully at them as they pass along through the streets.

Turkeys go round in flocks, that are now each half day decimated by the relentless axe. They strut proudly in the sun, and gobble furiously at the ap-

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proach of those who come to take yet another from their number.

Geese are hissing lustily beside every pool, and stand contemplatively on one leg just beyond the bars in the pasture. They raise themselves to flap their long wings as you pass them, and run out their red bills and arching necks.

In the country the preparations are altogether of a domestic character; but in the town every thing is on a bustling, commercial scale. Yet there is just enough bustle about the barns, and the cribs, and the granaries at home, and just enough confusion in the kitchens, to give the time an air of real, downright business. It makes children brisk and joyful. It imparts dexterity and speed to servants, and quickens the blood in older people.

Where these preparations are on a somewhat broad and liberal scale, as they were wont to be at Dovecote, there was business enough going on for any body. The kitchens were alive with work. Rows of turkeys and chickens lay on the long tables, and hung in clean places against the walls. There were baskets full of the feathers that were plucked off, and wings were thrust plentifully between the beams and the wall. Chicken feet and turkey feet lay about the back doors, and the fowls stared shyly at them as they crept round the yard for a bite out of season.

There were pies in preparation by the score; mince pies, and apple, and cranberry, and squash, and pumpkin; and varieties of tarts, and sauces, and jellies; and puddings in deep, brown dishes, dotted thickly with plums; and huge chicken pies, filled with wings, and side bones, and drumsticks, and wrought fancifully over the top with twisted crusts. All these crowded the

tables full. There was flour dust on almost every thing; especially when the pie crusts were rolling out, and the tarts were being made. And such great pans of milk, thick with standing cream! And such huge wooden trays of mince meat, with a long-handled wooden spoon sticking up from the middle of the mass!

My aunt never pretended to bake less than sixty pies of a Thanksgiving time; and I have often seen an exact hundred standing thickly all over the tables.

These were all *home* preparations. We loved to watch them going on, when we came home from school; and on the afternoon of the day before Thanksgiving, it was next to an impossibility to get us, and *keep* us, out of the kitchen. There was every thing there for us that was inspiring, and every thing that was attractive.

In the town markets it must have been different. There the stalls were hung about with huge sides of beef, rich and juicy, the rolls of tallow still clinging to the curved ribs. Turkeys and chickens were depending from hooks in monstrous bunches, or lay piled up in great heaps, their black and yellow legs sticking out beyond. There were bunches of rare and costly game, too, the very mention of which would moisten the mouth of an epicure. And haunches of venison; and saddles of choice muttons; and whole hogs, their feet sticking stiffly up, and their bloody mouths half open; and necklaces of sausage links stringing from hook to hook; and piles of vegetables of all kinds to accompany the meats when eaten.

Into those town markets strolled poor women, pinched with the cold, drawing their scanty shawls closer about their shoulders, and holding their last piece of silver in their hands while they looked for the largest possible

investment about them. There strode wealthy men, pointing with their canes to the choice bits their eyes fell upon, inquiring the prices, and ordering them sent to their steaming and well-stocked kitchens. There moused about keepers of cheap boarding houses, studying the prices and qualities of meats fit for soups and fit for nothing else, and asking the price of rare pieces, when they have got their sharp eyes only on pieces that every one else would be very apt to pass by. There wandered children of hard and relentless poverty, treating themselves to nothing but a *look* at all these delicacies, as if to appease the craving calls of their appetites in that way.

None of this in the country; none of these terrible contrasts at Dovecote; there was only plenty and happiness there.

When the sun rose we were all out of our beds. We went down to breakfast rather later than usual, and immediately afterwards began getting ready for meeting. There was but one sermon that day, and we invariably filled the old family pew with ready listeners.

The good minister had a text from the Old Testament somewhere, and expatiated in exactly the same strain from year to year upon the numerous reasons we all had for thankfulness to Heaven for our bounties.

He gave us striking passages from the histories of the patriarchs, and never failed to impress us with the simplicity of their lives, and their many sacrifices to Heaven on their festal days. His voice sounded more hollow among the seats of the meeting house, for Thanksgiving day never brought all his flock about him as did Sunday.

After the services he came round and shook hands with my parents and grandparents, laying his hand on

the head of some one of us children, and talking the while. He always got an urgent invitation to Dovecote for the evening, and to his credit be it said that he very rarely slighted it. When he sat with us about the great fire, after the day was over, he mingled in our childish sports, and even unbent himself so far as to tell a story occasionally with the rest.

What a great show the well-laid dinner table made! and what a much greater substance was there to it all!

Every place was filled; every plate was taken. An uncle came home with his wife and a baby or two, and an aunt came home with her husband and the same attachments; and sometimes friends from distant places came in obedience to special invitations, making a house full of us. I had an uncle that used to drop in on us at this time, who had travelled somewhat, and told tales of the countries he had seen, and their people. We counted much on his accession to our circle.

As we sat round the table, we made a picture rarely seen nowadays. Tongues were going every where confusedly; faces were lit up with smiles; pleasant things were said of one another; and a genial humor ruled the whole.

The turkey usually filled us to satisfaction. We were injudicious then, and knew nothing of that art of eating which we are very apt to learn afterwards; so that when the pies were cut up and handed about, a half dozen different kinds on each plate, we could do little else than sigh to think we could hold no more. Even before we came to the puddings we were full.

They sat long and late at table, chatting of the events of the year, the health of friends, and the well being of the different branches of the family. There was that sense of sufficiency — a very satisfactory feel-

ing — in the stomachs of all, that they talked as if contented, not only with themselves, but with all the world beside.

As the shadows began to gather about the roofs of the old mansion, we began to gather about the hearth. Old and young were there pleasantly mingled together — locks of raven and locks whiter than snow. Infants played with each other's eyes from their mothers' laps, crowing and jumping in their delight. My grandparents drifted into their old corner, and sat side by side there through the evening.

And as the firelight played over our faces, and while we all sat ranged about the hearth, the old tales were dragged out from the rubbish of memory. A chair was left vacant for the minister; and he came in and sat down in it as quietly as if he were a member of the household I knew he loved so well. And he had his story, too.

I could perpetuate this Thanksgiving time no better than by telling over again the tales that I heard at the gleaming hearth. If they could but bring back the old circle of loved faces again! — but it is hoping too much.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### THE MAGDALEN.

THICK and fast the snows were blowing, driving with their chilly tinkle against the window panes, and whitening the yard and the lawn with their drapery.

Down the great chimney the fierce wind roared, as if it would warm itself at the fire. The smoke, ever and anon, puffed out in eddying gusts into the room, making us retreat before it in confusion.

It was such a night as makes one feel glad that he has a home. It was a night houseless and hungry wanderers might well pray to be delivered from, as from a sure and terrible death.

The moans of the cutting winds, as there would be comparative lulls in the tempest, could be distinctly heard among the creaking boughs of the old elms, so that it might be imagined they were haunted with dark spirits, like ghouls.

The room in which we all sat was well lighted, as if the storm would not be so apt to reach us. It had the effect, however, to make us feel its terrors the more deeply. And the kitchen hearth was blazing with good, clean hickory, around which sprigs and sprays of brushwood were firing up in all manner of pyrotechnic wreaths. The servants were seated in a row about the spacious hearthstone, laughing, and telling over musty old stories, and gazing silently into the brilliant fire.

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### THE MAGDALEN.

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It was a picture of perfect contentment.

"It's a hard night for travellers," suggested my grandfather, taking an imaginary hitch in his chair nearer the fire.

He turned round and looked my grandmother fixedly in the face, as if awaiting her reply.

"I pity them without homes *to-night!*" said my grandmother, letting a stitch drop in her knitting as she spoke, and bending down to recover it again.

The storm drove surgingly at the doors and windows of the mansion. The wind went howling round the casements, seizing hold of the shutters and shaking them as if it would wrench them from their fastenings.

The sun had gone down behind lurid clouds that night; and I thought, as we all trudged home from school over the frozen hobbles, that those clouds looked ominous of a storm. A long, narrow strip of dull red lay along the horizon, a premonition—as the weather-wise servants had taught us—of a tempest and increased cold after. Sure enough! evening had hardly shut down upon us with its dense darkness, not a star twinkling through the unfathomable gloom, when we heard the furious spitting of the snow upon the windows.

At first it came by littles and at brief intervals. Then, as a fresh puff of the raw wind blew it with its breath, it drove on in a steady torrent against the panes. And now came the roaring of the mad winds themselves—blowing across distant meadows, all of snow crust—down through bare and shivering belts of wood—over dismal fens and stiffened marshes—past lone and dreary cottages, where the light of lamps beat feebly against the wall of darkness without—and about the old elms on our lawn—around the clustered chimney stacks—over and over the roofs—and then away upon the far-off fields and wastes again.

All the time the snow kept piling thicker and higher. There was no spot left uncovered. The bare places were no longer to be seen.

We knew that when we came down to breakfast in the morning every place out of doors would be banked up with the deep drifts; and our children's hearts felt willing to wait through the long and silent night watches, if we could but see the new winter sights in the morning. A snow landscape was pictured in our eyes already.

"Pity the *poor* such a night as this!" again exclaimed my grandfather, speaking in a low tone as to himself.

"There's none too much of it in the world for them, I fear!" returned my grandmother, glancing at the younger ones to see that her remark took proper effect.

"No, no; *that* there isn't!" said my grandfather.

A fresh gust blew down the chimney, scattering the white ashes all about the hearth.

"Whew!" exclaimed my grandfather, taking down his feet quickly from the great brass fender.

"For mercy's sake, mistress! For *mercy's* sake!" screamed a voice at the kitchen door.

The door opened simultaneously with the voice, and the maid stood before us all, her eyes distended, her face livid with fear, and her attitude that of wild despair.

"What is the matter?" cried at least a half dozen voices at once.

"There is a woman at the door — I can't tell — I never saw the sight before — I'm so frightened!" was all the explanation that could be got out of the superstitious girl.

My mother started to go to the kitchen herself.

At exactly the same moment, two of the men servants

came slowly walking in at the door, supporting by either arm the feeble steps of a woman.

"O, for the love of God, have pity! Do but have pity!" spake as sweet a voice as ever filled my memory with its silvery echoes; and the form of the woman sank down instantly between the men to the floor.

"Poor thing!" said my grandmother, pity gushing from her heart, as she stepped forward towards the object of her commiseration.

"Carry her into the bed room, and lay her on my bed!" called my grandfather, rising in high excitement from his chair.

"See! see!" exclaimed my mother, releasing a bundle from the firm and affectionate grasp of the poor woman, and discovering to us all the face of a sleeping babe.

"O, poor, poor thing!" said my grandmother, tenderly.

By this time the doorway was crowded with the anxious domestics, wondering whence such a strange apparition could come, and what might be her destination.

I caught a glimpse of that fearfully pale face. It will haunt my memory till my dying day.

The lips were partly opened, and perfectly livid. There was a look of exhaustion in her countenance that no words could one half so well have conveyed. It was terrible, the sight of it.

"Carry her into the bed room," said my mother, opening the door for them, while she herself held the infant in her arms.

They laid her on the little low bed of my grandparents, they themselves coming in to offer her all the sympathy in their reach. Every thing was in sudden confusion. The children were in a strange hubbub, saying nothing,

to be sure, yet betraying, by their anxious looks and quivering lips, the depth of the feelings that stirred them. There was a great running for warm water, and hot bricks, and cordials, and bandages of flannels; and there was likewise a deal of talking, among the children and between the servants, in low tones and in whispers; and all seemed chiefly anxious to be of some service when they could be of none whatever.

By and by the stranger revived. A warm room had been prepared for her above stairs, and a fire was already cheerfully flaming on the hearth. Without asking her a question, my mother had her at once removed to the snug little chamber, and herself followed anxiously along, holding the infant the while tenderly in her arms.

I shall never forget the look of that poor stranger woman, as she was supported out of the little bed room again to the chamber. She seemed unable still to speak, from the sheer exhaustion caused by her exposure. Her thin lips parted, as if she would utter what weighed on her heart so heavily. The large, saddened eyes of blue were widely open, but how depressed and languid! I could not fathom their strange expression, so much was I startled with it.

Her straggling hair, released from its confinement, had fallen down upon her forehead and over her face; and upon her cheeks the snow and sleet seemed to have matted it down. They had opened her dress, too, at the throat, revealing a skin of remarkable softness and transparency.

I could not help wondering what should have brought so delicate a creature to our door on such a night as that. The very thought of her exposure to the storm sent a shudder over my frame and a chill to my bones.

I saw no more of her again that night. We immediately took leave of our grandparents at the fireside, and went off to bed to dream of the wanderings of the houseless and the wretched. What knew *we*—favored as we were—of the biting frosts of want, and disease, and neglect? How could hearts like *ours*—unruffled by any other tempests than the little jealousies of our play—be expected to take in the breadth and the depth of human suffering?

It had all been a fable to us till now. We had read somewhat of it in story books, to be sure; and had listened to tales of very poor people, who were obliged to beg their precarious subsistence from door to door; but here was a *living example* of it all. Here was a tender wanderer, taken into shelter from the bitter buffetings of the winter storm, out of the pitiless darkness, out of the very winding sheets the snow had been busily weaving for her last shroud!

All this came home to us now. We felt it as nothing else could be felt, short of suffering ourselves. We *saw* the worn-down sufferer,—the pinched and pallid features,—the dying blue eyes,—the slender form, too weak, now, to support itself alone; and at such a sight our hearts bled. It was our first contact with the monster, Want, and formed a great event in our lives.

The next morning, when we came down, the earth was a sheet of snow. Deep drifts and banks were piled every where about the house; and the trees, just swaying with the wind that had not yet all died away, were thickly incrustated. Some of the limbs were ice-mailed and panoplied all over; and the huge trunks, where the winds had beat steadily against them through the storm, presented long strips of ice and snow to the newly-risen sun.

Our first thought was of the wanderer we had the night before taken in. I wondered what would have become of her if she had not found shelter as she did.

She was too much exhausted to think of leaving her chamber at all; and my mother saw that she wanted nothing where she was. She was determined she should not, at least, lack for comforts.

A cheerful fire was kept constantly burning for her on the chamber hearth, and my grandmother sat for hours together by her bedside.

The little infant had been shown us once or twice; but the mother faintly protested, as my grandmother afterwards told us. She was very weak yet with her sufferings, and said but little. She tried to speak her thanks, however, for the kindness done her; but her syllables died away in whispers on her pale lips, and with her blue eyes alone she expressed what she could not find words to utter with her tongue.

No questions were asked her of the manner in which she had come to her present need. Nothing was said to wound the tender heart that beat now so feebly in her bosom. My mother knew that, when the proper time should come, all would be made plain. In the mean while, she had nothing to think of but how best to secure the comfort of the unexpected guest.

We sat often together in the kitchen chimney corner, — the younger part of the household, — talking in low voices of this strangest of all events; wondering where the poor girl's friends could be, or even if she had any; expressing such free and undivided sympathy for her in her suffering as children ever have ready for sights of woe; and hoping, for her own sake at least, that her friends might come soon and take her back to themselves, where she should be happy again.

But there were the suspicious servants, ready to taint the freshness of our young hearts with their sinister looks, and the forbidding wags of their heads, and their dark hints, half expressed in whispers.

“She was no better than she should be!”

How my blood heated with the wicked suspicion! How I longed for the coming of the day when I could resent such cruel taunts in other ways than with my looks!

Poor wanderer! We daily listened, as we sat about the fire, to the little tender stories my mother dropped into our hearts about her; of how very patient she was in her suffering, never murmuring or repining; of how fervently she loved her little babe, talking to it in the tenderest voice, and pressing it passionately to her aching breast; of how she let fall brief hints of her friends, and, suddenly recollecting herself, seemed to beg, by the prayerful looks of her eyes, that nothing of it might be told again.

She became a mystery to us at the time, I know; but it is no mystery now. The world is full of just such woes. It is darkened with ten thousand thousand just such wrongs. It is made sad with many and many a low wail from just such pallid lips and just such breaking hearts.

The weeks wore away, and the months began to melt from the calendar. The winter was rough and rugged, purpling our cheeks, and biting our ears and fingers, as it has done many a time since. The storm banks in the skies gave up their dreary loads, and the earth grew alternately white, and flecked, and brown.

At length came the spring rains, searching and driving their drizzling floods every where. They beat steadily upon the meadows and the hillsides, till it

seemed as if the soaked ground could hold no more. The frosts thawed out, and the smokes steamed up from the plains.

And then came the smiling and rosy-lipped spring itself, with its freshly-sprouted grass blades, and its newly-clothed trees. Dainty green blades pricked through the softening mould, all along under the old brown walls, and down through the long lanes, and where strips of sunshine nestled warmest in every cosy nook and corner. The buds of the soft maples donned their scarlet jackets, fringed about all so tastefully; and the willow buds by the gurgling brooks put on their woolly caps of white; and the brilliant ladysmocks glistened in the lowlands, where the brooks threaded their way through the growing green.

The poor woman had not yet left her chamber. The little infant, however, waxed strong; but the mother's life seemed slowly waning. There could be but few more days left for her here.

The village doctor had been called in, and his skill had done for her what it could; but the little all of that was not enough. The blue of her large eyes was slowly retreating, as if backward to the depths of the heaven whence it came. The color had died from her sunken cheeks and from her thin lips. Only that sweet, resigned, angelic expression remained.

The minister came in to see her, and sat by her bedside, talking slowly and solemnly. But she gave up no secret to him. Her bleeding heart fluttered in her breast like a wounded bird; but not for such sympathy, then, as his.

He might offer consolation; he might freely spread out the blessed promises; he might be instrumental in breaking the glebe that had been softened, but never

yet broken; but he had not power to make that heart give up its troublesome secret. Or, if he had the power, he had not the skill to do it.

He prayed with her. I well remember his earnest tones in the little chamber, as we one day came home from school. They drew me strangely to the spot.

The poor creature sobbed as if her heart must break. She said nothing, however. Only those deep, agonizing sobs betrayed her emotion. Her thin and white hands lay, like faded shadows, over the counterpane; and ever and anon she would half lift them before her, as if in silent supplication.

Had she a mother? I asked myself. Had she not friends? Was she cast out thus to die alone, without that last boon so earnestly sought, the tenderly-given blessing of her who bore her?

She told them that night—the same night on which the minister came—to leave her alone. My mother had received the whole of her story, now, from her lips, promising to keep it faithfully till the change came, whether for the worse or the better.

It was the old story over again of

“One more unfortunate!”

Towards morning only was she left alone, as she had desired. She wished to have her own thoughts undisturbed, and to get sleep, if she could.

And the soft beating of her own bruised heart against one other fresh and tender heart was all, save the occasional deep breathing, that was to be heard in the apartment.

The morning was a fresh gift from God. Never dawned spring day more gloriously.

They had opened many of the windows of the old

house, to let in the new sun and the early morning sounds. The birds were twittering in the garden trees and in the old elms, and the swallows were swarming with their shrill cry beneath the barn eaves. Fresh winds drew into the rooms, loaded with the sweet fragrance.

My mother went softly to the sick woman's chamber, and cautiously opened the door, fearing to waken her.

She looked towards the bed, and a sudden chill froze her blood.

There lay the wearied body; but the heart had done counting the ebbing pulses of her life!.

The babe's fat little hand rested against its mother's cold cheek, as if to waken her to behold the morning.

But the poor mother had waked that morning in another world!

## CHAPTER XL.

### A LITTLE STRANGER.

THERE are events in the lives of children, no less than in those of men, that change the whole current of their feelings. The stream takes a sudden turn, and sweeps away through pleasant lands of which the heart could have had no thought before.

It was much later than usual when we got home from school one afternoon, and I recollect that when I opened the door only my grandfather sat in the corner by the fire. The winter was far spent, and the old spring rudeness was slowly mantling his shrivelled cheeks again.

Just as soon as I had answered to his customary salutation — for he always had a mellow word or two for each one of us on our return from school — my grandmother came softly tripping through the opposite door, and took the old accustomed seat beside him.

"I am going to tell you something, my child," said she, extending her hand towards me.

I looked up into the faces of both my grandparents, half expecting to read the wonderful intelligence in their eyes. I noticed that my grandfather's were twinkling very pleasantly upon me, and that my grandmother half averted hers; still, she wore a very contagious smile about her mouth. *Something* was coming; that I knew. What could it be?

She took hold of my hand, and drew me gently to her side. The old man looked continually at me, as if he

were delighted at beholding the effect of my grandmother's very skilful tactics. For myself, I remember only that I was lost in wonder.

The gentle old lady leaned her head down, still keeping hold of my arm, and whispered in my ear,—

"You've got another little sister!" said she; and immediately lifted her face to that of my grandfather. They exchanged very knowing looks; and I remember that my grandfather was so highly pleased, I knew not then with what, that a genial smile broke out all over his benignant face.

I was plunged into a deeper perplexity than ever.

The two old folks had something to say for a minute or two in a whisper; and then my grandmother, whose hold on my arm had now relaxed, took me by the hand again, and asked me if I would be sure and keep *very* still, and make not the least bit of noise.

Certainly I would. That was a thing very easily done, when by the means one's curiosity was in the way of being gratified.

She thereupon rose from her chair, and led me out of the room with her.

I next found myself in a darkened chamber, a cheerful fire blazing on the hearth, and my good aunt sitting in a chair near the bedside. The curtains were down at the windows, and voluminous curtains let fall their ample folds on either side of the old-fashioned bedstead. My grandmother led me to the hearth, and made me sit down; not yet, however, speaking a word. Then she stepped over to my aunt, and exchanged a few words with her in whispers that I could not hear. There was an ominous sound in the whispers, scarce breaking through the silence of that sombre-looking chamber.

My eyes were plunged thoughtfully in the glowing fire.

At length, as I looked up, I saw my aunt standing beside me, holding what then seemed a little bundle of white muslin in both her hands; and my grandmother looking complacently over her shoulder, first at the carefully-held bundle, and then, at me.

My senses, somehow, came to me sufficiently to suggest the need of rising to my feet, if I would see the wonder that my aunt held out so patiently for my inspection.

There it was, sure enough! How oddly it all came over me! The world seemed suddenly enlarged, so that my heart, on the moment, took in more than it had ever done before.

I gazed, with emotions I have no more words for now than I had then, at the little expressionless face that lay before me. The eyes were shut. The features were almost too diminutive to be recognizable. It looked like nothing I had ever seen before, and like nothing I thought I should ever see again.

My aunt and my grandmother exchanged quick glances—very expressive glances, too. My grandmother's face betrayed the deep delight of her heart. She could not have kept it back if she would.

We all had a merry time of it over "the baby" so soon as our astonishment had a little abated; and he had, for the moment, quite a flowing feather stuck in his cap, who was allowed the indescribable privilege of holding the nursling in his own arms. But even on the occasion of such experiments, my aunt—kind and thoughtful soul!—held out her hands beneath the precious load, that there might be no room at all for an accident.

There was another added to our unbroken number. Nine, now, in all! We felt as if we must move back a

little, to widen the circle, and let the little stranger in. We looked more thoughtfully at one another, as if we were impatient to know of what exact nature the bud was that had just been ingrafted on the family tree. There was a secret reaching out of sympathies on all sides—an intense yearning towards the new comer. Our hearts desired nothing so much as to begin to grow into this other and fresher heart. We all wanted to begin the making our marks upon the white sheet, whereon was not yet a single scrawl.

Those were famous days, as the baby began to grow bigger, and as we disputed for precedence in holding it so awkwardly in our laps. The old rooms of Dovecote never were so full of echoes as when we shouted at the wonderful progress our baby made; while we sagely questioned if ever baby got on so fast before. There was nothing we were unwilling to do for the little one. There was scarce any thing we *could not* do for her. The pet lamb of the whole flock, she kept the fountains of our hearts all the time full and flowing.

There is no better loadstone in the home circle than this. All the petty jealousies are drowned out in the flood of the common joy. All the trifling complaints die for the want of food to nourish them. All the little bickerings are forgotten, as every heart moves silently and unbidden to this common centre.

My grandmother had the privilege of naming the child, and the day of the christening was a day of all others to be remembered. I see those two old people now, standing over the irreverent little babbler, and scarce concealing their smiles as she throws up her chubby hand to the clergyman.

It is only a picture of youth, set about with a framework of crisp and dried mosses!

## CHAPTER XLI.

### JARVIE THATCH.

It was a day in early spring. The streets of the town were alive with travellers in quest of the bracing airs that were abroad. The memories of the dismal days that had gone were smothered in the warmth of the pleasant sunshine.

About the wharves swarmed beings of all shades and colors, that the spring sun seemed to have thawed out from their hiding-places. Lazy fellows were sunning themselves against old buildings, or under the sides of casks and barrels, their hands in their pockets, and their eyes wandering off over the glistening water.

A rough-looking man, to appearance little accustomed to these scenes about the quays, was strolling along through the streets, his face haggard, and his eye burning with excitement. Ever and anon he stopped, to study more closely the features of some face he espied, and then, dropping his head, walked on again.

The traveller was old Jarvie Thatch, the dweller with little Daisy on the mountain at Kirkwood.

"*That* face looked like his!" exclaimed he, in a sullen voice. "I thought I had him then!" And then he would start off once more.

Some secret trouble was preying, like a vulture, on his heart. He was roaming the streets, as if he cared for no one living, while yet each human face seemed to have such an interest for him. Now he just crept along,

with his sharp eyes every where about him; and now he took an impulsive start, and pushed and drove along as if he saw nothing on his way.

There was that in the conduct and appearance of old Jarvie, that day, to challenge attention. Not a few passers turned half round to catch another glimpse of him as he went by, and not one who saw him but thought there was some secret worth knowing in his history.

There *was* a secret, and a fearful one for one like him to keep. It preyed on him all the time. It allowed him no rest, day or night. It changed his whole nature. It had made him the hermit he so long had been, and drove him out of his retirement thus regularly on his erratic journeys. He was under its controlling influence while he wandered about the docks, and wharves, and piers, and when he plunged within the purlieus of low life, and vice, and crime — going to the very heart of all, to see if he might possibly find a solution for his problem there.

He stopped in a narrow lane, before a low door, and peered cautiously in.

"If I really thought any good'd come of it," said he; "if I only thought that I should find him *here*! But how can I expect to? It ain't likely he's a man to go into such places; and yet he *may* be. I've heerd of his follerin' the sea; and may be he does now."

A voice from within hailed him just at that moment.

"What do you want? Come in!"

He looked in again, hesitated a moment upon the threshold, and went in.

The place was a sailor's boarding house. A table was already spread for customers in a half retreat but a little way from the door, and it was from this point

that the voice proceeded. The apartment wore an exceedingly dingy look, and the furniture seemed in all respects to correspond with it.

The person who addressed him was a round, fat, oily little man, with a rubicund face, on which the smiles seemed to burn and blaze, and a prompt patronizing air about him that would have assured any landlord of greater pretensions his fortune. As Jarvie stepped in, he kept bobbing and bowing his head, the crown of which was as smooth as an apple.

Jarvie walked straight up to him, his eye kindling. The host drew back, half fearing the strange gleam in the stranger's eyes. The former bent over towards him, and said, —

"Has he been in here?"

"Who?" asked the landlord. "I guess so. *Who*?"

"O, then you don't know! Then you don't know who I mean!"

The fat landlord was anxious to answer all the inquiries in his power, as well as all that were beyond it; so he replied a second time, —

"Yes, I *guess* he's been in here. They *all* come here. But I can't tell you, you know, till you say who you mean!"

Jarvie looked at him fixedly, as if the man had somehow succeeded in tripping him. As soon as he came to his understanding again, he stooped down, and whispered in his ear.

The landlord slowly shook his head, and threw up one foot after the other, as if he were going to cross the room at a stride.

"*He's* the one!" said Jarvie.

The other kept negatively shaking his head.

"Haven't you seen him?"

"Don't know him," answered the man.

"Don't know him! *I* do! every body does!"

The landlord now ceased the motion of his head, and fixed his eye on the gleaming eye of his visitor. He seemed trying to get at the heart of his monomania.

"He'd oughter be here," continued Jarvie, swinging his arms around. "He'd oughter be every where. I expect he's all about the streets. *You* know him! Every body knows him!"

"No," said the landlord; and again shook his head.

There was a silence of a few minutes, during which Jarvie fastened his eyes on the sanded floor, appearing to be lost in thought. Finally he broke from it all, and asked if he could have something to eat.

"Set right up here!" said the landlord, bustling about to make ready a place for him at the table.

"I'm *hungry*," added Jarvie. "I've been without for so long, nobody'd believe it. I walk the streets all the time."

"You *look* tired," returned the host, going on with his work.

After this he let the wandering man run on with his talk much as he pleased; answering an occasional yes or no to the meaningless interrogatories he put him, or confirming him in the ideas he seemed trying to express by such phrases as, "Just so!" "*I know* it!"

Jarvie had the table all to himself. It was not a time in the day when there was an expectation of much of a throng about the board, so that his disposition to talk with himself was little hindered by the stares, and retorts, and questions of strangers.

While he ate his cheap and coarse food, bolting it as if he were never to taste the like again, his thoughts carried him pleasantly back from this close, stifling town

air, and those noisy, confused streets, to the quiet nest he had built for himself upon the mountain side; to the little one he had left there unprotected; to the days he had passed in and around that spot already, some of them fearfully rent with the tumultuous feelings that drove him like a maddened creature into the depths of the forest, and some mellowed with the saddened memories that brooded about his heart; and as he saw them all rise again to his view, the strangest conflict of emotions was going on within him. He dropped his knife and fork, and looked up wildly at the walls.

"Poor Mary! Poor thing!" exclaimed he, aloud. "To feel that you are without revenge yet! It 'most kills me to know that my hands are tied so!"

From behind the edge of a temporary screen, the landlord looked at his customer in profound amazement. He feared lest he might be really crazy; and even began to bestir his wits to devise some safe means of having him secured, in case the man should attempt violence. The scowl on his brow deepened and darkened, as Jarvie went on:—

"You told me, Mary, on your death bed, to take care of the child: that I've done; and that I'm always goin' to do, as long as I live. And I swore at the same time, that, if there was revenge to be had this side of eternity, I'd *have* it! I will! I'll get it, if I wander the world over! O, my poor girl's memory! How it haunts my heart all the time! What a feeling comes over me, when I think o' the wrong that was done her! How my brain swims, as if my whole head was full o' blood! No, Mary, you shall be remembered! Your *father* 'll never forget you, if all the rest of the world does!"

Then he fell to his meal again, eating his food with the ravenousness of one nearly famished.

As soon as he had finished he rose from his seat and walked straight to the fat little landlord, who, it must be added, rather quailed before him.

"I can't pay you for this," said Jarvie. "I've got no money!"

The host looked half indignant and half surprised.

"What d'ye set down for, then?" he asked, drawing back still more than before.

"I was *starving*!" replied Jarvie. "But I can't pay you now. I'll pay you some other time. I'll be sure to remember you!"

There was something so impressive and peculiar in his manner, that the taken-in host suffered his unprofitable customer to retreat to the door and pass out without the protest of a single word. When he was gone, the little fat man stood for some time with folded arms, lost in wonder at the incident that had made such a ripple in his day's life.

## CHAPTER XLII.

### IN THE STREETS.

AFTER Jarvie left the scene of his refreshment, he turned himself upon the town, grappling his staff more tightly than ever as he went along. His entire look was haggard and worn enough, so much so that not a few turned quite round to regard him still more particularly as he passed.

At first he followed the blind course of alleys and narrow lanes, uncertain where they were to lead him. By squalid men, that floated along in shoals, some of them more squalid even than himself; under windows where wretched-looking faces crowded and husky voices mixed their babble on the air; past doors where men gathered and chatted, some of them rolling and reeling with their morning potations; through crowds, jostling and rubbing as he went, that were driving on for their day's business, or that were lazily drifting onward wherever chance might carry them,—the wretched old man wound his way.

The town sights were no sights at all to his diseased mind. His eyes were not open to take in pictures either of delight or misery. He saw nothing that could impress him. He heard nothing, not so much as the stunning rattle of the carts, and stages, and wagons. His thoughts were nowhere about him, were on nothing with which he had come in contact as yet. His vision was wandering and imperfect.

A man walking in a dream would have been no inapt likeness of old Jarvie that day. His lips were all the time moving, and he muttered low and incoherent syllables. Now and then he would bring his staff—it was the old oak stick he had himself cut on the mountain, near Kirkwood—down heavily on the pavement, as if he might be illustrating his thoughts with some violent and effective gesture.

Presently he entered accidentally upon one of the larger thoroughfares. Here every thing was on a grander and more impressive scale. The streets were so much wider, the stores were so much more splendid, the people were so much better dressed: so great a change called him to himself, in spite of the power of his morbidness. The new sights flashed so vividly upon him that their inspiriting influence at once entered all his thoughts. For a time, then, he became simply a child, gazing, with the ardor of young curiosity, at the sights that glittered on his right hand and his left, and suffering himself to be elated with the stirring sounds that greeted him on every hand.

Now he stopped before a large plate window, and crowded with others to study the free gallery of pictures that was thus provided for him in common with the rest. There were beautiful prints, and engravings, and two or three oil paintings. When Jarvie saw them, all the traces of that love for beauty that slumbered in his heart were awakened again. His soul warmed, and his dull eye kindled. Grasping his staff with another clutch, he crossed his hands behind him, and feasted on the bounty that had been spread for all.

There was one picture—a portrait. How much he thought it resembled Mary—*his* Mary! Could it have been copied from her features? Could it be pos-

sible that she had ever looked at that painting herself in years past, and watched the slow process of its skillful completion?

The very possibility of such a thing—delusive as the thought really was—was enough to fire all his feelings anew. His energies suddenly flamed up, and he felt himself younger by many and many a year. There was the dear face of Mary, just as it looked before trouble had set its burning seal upon its features. There was that speaking eye, full of affection for her old father, and holding evidence of the store that was to be thrown away on another. About the lines of her mouth the same pleasant smile was playing—the smile that had held his heart in subjection since the innocent days of her childhood.

Was this all a dream? Could illusion be produced that would be able to work such deep changes in his feelings? Was he to wake from this sad yet delightful deceit, and find himself ten times more bereft than before?

The people came up to the window, looked a moment or two, and moved on. But Jarvie stood firmly to his ground. He saw nothing about him; his thoughts were upon nothing but the single picture that had so taken him captive.

A gentleman finally came out from the store, and told him not to stand before his window any longer; it was not a place for such as he to collect!

The dream was all broken *then*—shivered, shattered into a thousand fragments.

Jarvie looked up with a half-melancholy expression in the man's face, but said nothing. The sadness was lying across his heart, so that words were not at his command. He felt no resentment—nothing like a

flaming up of passion ; but, giving the man a reproachful look, he turned silently away.

All through the day he wandered in the streets, without plan and without purpose. There was a single thought that engrossed him ; and he followed blindly on after its wayward impulses. It was to hunt down the author of all his misery. It was to fall upon him, whenever and wherever he might be found, and silence the beating of his black heart at once and forever.

The influence of the pictures had left him ; or, if yet alive, it was only to kindle his nature with new thoughts of revenge. If it worked within him at all, it was to change the current of his feelings, freezing them where they but now were so genial, and firing them where but so lately they were at rest.

He begged for his dinner, which he obtained only after many repulses and much difficulty. At the areas where he preferred his supplications servant maids told him "No," very sharply, and said he had better be gone. Ladies shunned contact with him on the walks, so that he saw his best course would be to take to the edge of the curbstone. He threw his face up towards the shining windows of the elegant dwellings, and tried to study the great cause of the difference in worldly conditions. As elegantly attired females swept by him, deigning no notice of so miserable a being as himself, they knew not that a keen and searching pair of eyes was upon them, and that an active brain was endeavoring to understand the true secret of their superiority over an humbler child, like his own dead one.

He stopped and gazed up at the golden dials of the town clocks, notching off the moments with his eyes. His vision ran up the slender spires and steeples, and then swam away in the melting sea of blue just beyond

How his thoughts went out through his eyes, and sailed away to the dim and distant regions where he felt lived the idol of his heart !

A man, wearing a badge of office, accosted him towards the latter part of the day, and asked him what he was doing, standing about so.

Jarvie sullenly answered, "Nothing," and eyed the functionary keenly.

"Then you'd better keep moving," suggested the latter.

"It's jest what I've been doin' all day," said he.

"Where do you think of going?"

He shook his head, as if he meant to say he didn't know.

"You mustn't stand about in this way," repeated the man. "If you've got any where to go, move along!"

Jarvie wanted to ask him how he should do, if he *hadn't* any particular place to go to ; but he was thoughtful enough to keep his own counsel, and walked on.

He crossed into another street, and followed its course for perhaps a quarter of a mile. Then he turned at his right hand, and walked back for twice that distance. Then the streets seemed to diverge as from a common centre ; and he took the narrowest, in which human life seemed to be most crowded, and where there was, apparently, the best prospect of studying the passing faces.

So he threaded his way among the crowds, at this time in the day more dense and bustling than ever. Working people were going home from their day's business, many of them with the pails and baskets in which they were wont to carry their dinners. Girls walked by him, weary and pale from their steady confinement. He studied all their expressions, all the time thinking only of that one face that was mirrored in his heart.

Boys were out, crying newspapers and shouting to each other. Carts were going by without loads, as if to another night's rest from labor. In the shop windows the flare of gaslights might here and there be seen, though, as yet, the illumination was not general. Clerks were moving articles from the doors within, and shutting out the cool night air from the shops. And men stood at corners, some of them giving hurried directions to porters, and others comparing notes on the day's proceedings.

Faster and faster now the night shadows gathered, crowding down between the tops of the high buildings, and blocking up the entrances to the streets with gloom. The old man's eyes were more piercing than ever. He seemed to grope his way along now, looking carefully in the face of every man he met. He clutched his heavy oak stick still more firmly, and struck it smartly against the pavement.

A newsboy cried his wares exactly in his face, making him start with alarm.

"You little villain!" he muttered, half raising his stick.

A heavy cart rumbled along behind him, and the horse's nose just brushed his shoulder.

He jumped half across the sidewalk to escape the impending danger.

By and by the lights grew more plenty. They winked at him from the tall lantern posts that lined the streets, and flashed in his face from the shop windows. His complexion looked much darker than usual in their glare, and his expression vastly more haggard and repulsive. People passed him as if he were an object of their suspicion.

Suddenly he stopped short. His quick eye caught a

glimpse of a face he thought he knew. He threw himself exactly in the way of a man who was passing, and clutched him fiercely by the throat.

"Villain! Death to you now! I've found you at last!" were his threatening exclamations.

At the same time he raised his heavy staff, and began to deal the blows about him, with no regard to any one's safety. His brain was on fire. His eyes swam in blood. He worked his features into the most terrible shapes. The frowns on his face were as dark and threatening as clouds full of storms.

"What is this? What do you mean?" shouted the victim, appalled by so unexpected an attack. "Hands off! Away with you!"

"You *know* what I mean!" cried Jarvie, in return. "I have hunted long for you! I've found you at last! There—go to your doom!"

He bestowed a heavy blow as he spoke, which the man caught with his arm. Still he kept his hold at his throat.

At this opportune moment a crowd began to gather. Some one cried one thing, and some another. All united in seizing hold, finally, of the madman, and securing his arms from the possibility of further mischief.

An officer came up and marched him off to the station house, under a popular escort. His victim, however, caught his fierce look, as they were carrying him away. Evidently he saw who he was, for, on the instant, he plunged into the crowd of passers, determined to keep out of the public view.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

### THE BOY AND THE MAN.

Among those that followed the unfortunate prisoner along was a newsboy, who carried his dwindled bundle tightly under his left arm, and ceased his crying until he could find time to gratify his curiosity.

The mob swelled as it went on, much like a snowball in its course down a hill. All sorts of people joined in the pursuit. Some hurried to the shop doors, and looked out eagerly to know what all the tumult meant. Others moved off briskly from the walks, unwilling to encounter so formidable an assemblage. In the front of all walked the prisoner. He was bareheaded now, and his oak staff had been taken from him. His eyes were bent upon the ground, and, from the expression of his face, one would believe that his thoughts troubled him seriously.

One and another offered some word to him; but he took no heed of any thing. He merely bent to the fate that had overtaken him, trying to disguise his deep chagrin in the best way he could.

He was conducted to a lockup, and there secured for the night. Those about the office of the prison asked him no questions, but suffered him to sit moodily, for a short time, on the low bench on which he had been placed, his face buried in his hands.

A boy came and ventured to sit down beside him. It would seem that his curiosity was no larger than his  
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sympathy. There was something in the worn look of the man that appealed to his tenderer feelings at once.

He spoke to Jarvie, hoping to get a reply. But the man kept his face downwards, lost in the depths of his wretchedness.

The boy was little Billy Stokes—the old friend of Milly, and the later friend of Snarly Moll!

Could it be that his young heart, tutored as it must be to such scenes, still retained a germ of sympathy for every sufferer?

"Could I be of any help to you?" inquired he, in his pleasant voice.

The tone in which it was given awoke Jarvie from his dull revery. He raised his head, and looked round at his side, where Billy sat. After he had reviewed him carefully, he answered,—

"What can such as *you* do?"

"I'll do what good I can," said Billy. "I'm *willin'*!"

"Give me your hand," said Jarvie, extending his own. "We'll strike a friendship from this minute! But you can't be of any help."

"Why not? Try me. Tell me how."

"You wouldn't know how to go to work," returned Jarvie, shaking his head. "But you're a brave little feller, though. God bless ye for your kindness! Mayhap you'll make a *man* yet!"

Billy was going to say he hoped so, when one of the officers about the place interrupted them.

"Come," said he to Jarvie.

"Where?"

"I'll show you. Into another room. Here—this way!"

Billy at once rose to his feet, and begged permission

of the officer, in a whisper, to go with him for a few minutes.

"What for?" inquired he, looking at him closely.

"O, I want to talk," said Billy.

"Talk?"

"Yes; somethin' pertikler."

"You can't stay long, if you do," said the officer.

"Only a few minnits," said Billy. "He wants me. I'll be much obliged for it."

"I don't care," returned the man; and led them both into a close apartment, locking the door after him.

"Have they locked *you* up, too?" asked Jarvie, turning round and finding only his little friend with him. "What have *you* been doin'?"

"Nothing. I asked to come in with you. They'll let me out agin, I guess."

The unhappy man seated himself on the bench that was placed against the wall, and put on all his former gloom again. His countenance fell rapidly, a thing Billy Stokes was nowise slow to perceive.

"What did they take you *for*?" asked Billy. "What did you do?"

"Then you didn't *see* it?"

"No; I come along with the crowd."

"'Twas nothing," said Jarvie; "only I knocked a man."

"*That's* something, I sh'd think. Hurt him much? Where is he?"

"I wish I'd *killed* him," answered Jarvie; "but I guess I didn't."

"What for? What's *he* done?"

"Robbed me; robbed me of all I had!"

"Phew!" ejaculated the youthful newsman. "Then I should thought they'd took *him*!"

"So any body would; but they didn't. My boy, do you know—or, if you don't, you will—that justice ain't to be got in this world? that every thing goes by chance? that my life hasn't been any thing but luck and chance from the beginning?"

Billy looked serious and thoughtful.

"That man ought to ha' died long ago! He ain't worthy to *live*! But *he* goes free, and *I* am locked up! That's the way the world wags, my little son."

"Why didn't you never tell on him, then?" ventured Billy.

"I never *see* him till to-night; and I've waited and watched for him these *years*! How *could* I tell on him? Besides, what he done people don't consider *crime*. They don't punish a man for breaking a father's *heart*. But if he filches from his *pocket*, the prison doors swing open for him of themselves. That's it, my son!"

"Did *he* break *your* heart?" innocently pursued the boy, little versed in such matters theoretically.

"He's come as near to it as any body ever will," answered Jarvie. "But what of that? There ain't no punishment for him, only what I've a mind to deal out myself, as I *was* a-doin'. But the minnit one takes such matters into his own hands, see how they pull him, and claw him, and lug him off to prison! See what a black mob follows him, as if every man'd like to tear his heart out!"

"It's hard," sympathized the boy.

"You'll know it for yourself, as soon as you get along farther in life. I never hit the man so much as a smart rap, he kept off my stick so well; but that ain't saying I didn't *mean* to. I'd a-*killed* him, certain, if I could. He deserves it. If nobody else'd do it, *I* was ready to."

"But where had you seen him before?" asked Billy, pursuing the subject along to its source.

"You can't know that," answered Jarvie, mournfully. "It's more than I can tell. I'd tell you, if I told any body, for I seem to think you don't like to see me in trouble."

"I don't," said Billy.

"But I must keep that secret for myself. I can carry it about with me whole better than I can break it up and divide it round. Yet it troubles me a good deal."

"Then the man must be afraid of you?"

"I don't believe he'll show himself agin," said Jarvie.

"If he don't," answered Billy, "then you won't have no cause to fear; for there'll be nothin' against you."

Jarvie pondered upon it.

"*That's* true enough!" finally exclaimed he, his countenance lighting up. "That's true enough! I'd never ha' thought on it!"

"And so you'll go free," added Billy.

"Then I'll go free!" repeated the old man. "I'll have no fears of myself now. He'll never dare to make complaint of me; and so they'll discharge me. That's it. Why didn't I think o' that before? But you're a right pleasant little fellow, ain't you?"

Billy looked modest; and told him he didn't like to see any body suffer—man, woman, or child.

"You're right!" exclaimed Jarvie. "You're right! I hope you'll find somebody at your hand when you're in trouble yourself."

"I hope I never'll git *into* trouble," rejoined he.

"Well, well," said Jarvie, "that's better yet! But, then, one can't tell what's goin' to happen, you know. The world's full of chance. I never thought o' bein'

here, and brought here for such a crime as I *might* ha' done. It was chance that brought me here."

"And chance," added Billy, "that saved that man's life, and your own, too!"

"Jest so, my son," acquiesced Jarvie. "But I'll see more of you, some time. I hope you'll prosper, wherever you be."

Just at that moment the officer opened the door, and told the boy he must go out of the room. He could not allow him to stay longer.

Billy started for the door, throwing a look full of sympathy upon the unhappy old man as he went. Jarvie returned it, and exclaimed, as he extended him his rough hand,—

"May Heaven prosper you! Go on as you do now, and you'll come out as well as any body! Good night!"

And with the slam of the heavy door Jarvie Thatch was left alone to himself and his reflections. The apartment was dark and quite gloomy. His thoughts, too, were but little at variance with the aspect of the place. He sat for an hour or more afterwards, brooding over the first trouble that had wrought for him such complete desolation.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

### A JOYFUL MEETING.

THERE was great joy expressed in the countenance of Miss Nancy, one day, as she opened and read a letter that had just been brought her from the post office; and while the rest were waiting to learn what was the cause of it all, that they might share it with her, she told them that her friend, Mrs. Trevor, had proposed coming to Dovecote for a few days, as soon as she should have finished a visit at a point on the way.

The children all immediately clapped their hands, and seemed as much delighted as Miss Nancy herself.

"When will she come? What day will she be here?" was asked by more than one.

"Next week," replied Miss Nancy, again referring to her letter; "on Thursday."

The intelligence was the signal for a general juvenile race about the house and around the yard. One told the other of it, as if the latter had not heard it too; and all joined in saying that they knew she would be good company, for she was a friend of Miss Nancy.

The latter still held Milly by her side, talking with her about it.

"Now," said she, "I shall want to show her what a nice little friend I've got here; and I know she'll envy me the possession. It was in coming from a visit with her that I found *you*, dear Milly. Was any thing ever more fortunate?"

We counted the days impatiently till that before the appointed Thursday, and then we slowly notched off the hours. It seemed as if this last day was the longest of all. From Thursday morning's breakfast till the late hour for the appearance of the coach at the inn, there was a universal watching and wondering.

At last the carryall came up the avenue, with my father driving, and Miss Nancy and her friend on the back seat. As soon as we espied the latter, there was a spontaneous burst of joy.

But as eyes grew sharper, and observation became more close, it was discovered that the vehicle contained still another. It was a girl, and a stranger. We were all lost in our attempts to guess who she could be.

They came up before the door and got out. As soon as they entered the door, a very unexpected cause of excitement offered itself. The girl Mrs. Trevor had brought with her ran hastily up to Milly and kissed her right heartily. No one knew what to make of it. And the affair became still more complicated, when it was observed that Milly returned her affectionate advances with quite as much warmth as they were offered.

The stranger girl was nobody but Snarly Moll. She had had the good luck to drift into the pleasant harbor Mrs. Trevor's house offered her from the tempestuous ocean she had sailed all her life, and had now come out to Dovecote with her new mistress, to be deeply surprised herself, and to surprise the rest as well.

"Why, Milly!" was her first exclamation.

Both Mrs. Trevor and Miss Nancy regarded them with astonishment.

"Who is she?" asked the latter, in an undertone.

"A little girl I took; but how should she know *her*?" returned Mrs. Trevor.

"That passes my comprehension. We shall learn, however, in good time, I do not doubt."

The girls, after their first interview, sat apart, looking at each other, but saying nothing.

Mrs. Trevor asked Snarly Moll, as soon as the family circle became somewhat composed, where she had seen little Milly before. The girl hung her head, and seemed excessively loath to answer. So the question, just at that time, was not pressed.

Then Miss Nancy asked Milly if she knew Moll before that day.

"Yes," was her candid answer.

"Well, where did you ever see her before?"

Milly half hesitated. It was quite natural that she should have a repugnance to bringing up the reminiscences of the Byeboro' poorhouse.

"Where I lived once," finally replied she, however.

Miss Nancy threw a quick glance at her friend, and said to her, in a low voice, —

"I'll tell you all about it, by and by."

It was not a great while after that the two waifs of fortune, Milly and Molly, found an opportunity to hold the private and prolonged conference each so much desired. They went out behind the old barn, and sat down just beyond the heavy latticed gate that opened upon the pasture.

It seemed a long time since they last saw each other, and they betrayed their astonishment at first by staring very steadily into one another's eyes. Then words came slowly and by degrees. Moll, however, was much the more ready with them.

"It's so strange," said she, "that I should find *you* here! I never thought o' such a thing! I've thought of you a good deal, fust and last, as I had time; but

little was the idee I had that you'd turn up in *this* quiet place. Most as pleasant as Byeboro', ain't it?" And she nudged Milly with her elbow, and laughed in her face.

"I had rather live here than at Byeboro'," said Milly. "I was glad to get away from there."

"But how did ye *do* it?" asked Moll. "That's what puzzled us all. We lost you; and every body was a wonderin' and huntin' round to know where you'd gone to. And you went in the night, too! We see you go to bed; but when we got up, you was gone! It troubled old Flox a good deal. You remember *him*, don't ye?"

Milly thought he had a small place in her memory.

"Wal, I s'pose he was afeard folks would think he'd made 'way with you, or somethin' else as bad; and that's what troubled him. You never see a man so worked up as he was. And I was glad of it, too!"

"But how did *you* get away?" inquired Milly.

"*Run* away," promptly answered the other. "Ain't that the way you got clear yourself?"

"Yes; but I couldn't help it. I was sick of staying there. I never was used to such people."

"Poor thing! No more did the rest on us think so, at the time! For one, though, I felt glad when you'd certainly gone. I *knew* you couldn't git no *worse* place; and perhaps there was a chance of a better somewhere. And you've found it! How did ye?"

Milly then began and narrated to her Byeboro' acquaintance the whole story of her escape from the poorhouse prison with Adam Drowne, and of her protracted journey with him; of their good and bad fortune by the way; of her accidental separation from her protector; of her trouble on the crowded steamboat, and the kind sympathy of a strange lady; and, finally, of her being brought straight to the quiet door of Dovecote by her

unknown friend, by whose side she had to that day contentedly remained.

The story struck the mind of Moll as being a very strange one indeed. There was a mystery in the good fortune of her friend that one like her could not be expected to fathom.

"You *was* lucky, wan't you?" exclaimed she, as soon as her surprise would allow her.

"I am glad to live here," answered Milly; and, indeed, the expression of her countenance at that moment showed it.

"And old Adam, old crazy Adam; what ever got *him*, I wonder? He never come back again, while *I* was at Byeboro'."

"He's been here," Milly told her.

This was another surprise.

"Why, how you talk! I never heerd sich stories as you're a tellin' of me! Adam Drowne been here! How come he to find the way? How come he to know *you* was here?"

"He didn't, I guess; but he came by accident. He didn't come to the house here; I saw him over in the meadow."

"In the medder! Adam Drowne wandering round *here*, in these parts! I wonder where he *don't* go, now!"

And so every body else, who knew him, wondered.

"Now tell me about yourself," begged Milly. "How did you get here with that lady, Miss Nancy's friend."

"Whose friend, did you say?" asked the other, her ears open to catch every thing.

"Miss Nancy's."

"Then *she's* the lady that fetched you here? the one that rode up with us from the tavern down here."

"Yes," said Milly, "that's the one. She's Miss Nancy."

"Wal, how did I get acquainted with Miss Trevor, do you say? I'll tell you. It wan't a great while after *you* got out of the old Byeboro' poorhouse that I thought I'd do somethin' much the same way. So I followed on, too."

"Who came with you?" interrupted Milly.

"Who come with me? I come alone; and afoot, too. I made my tracks in the road jest as quick as I could get off. I'd no notion, at the time, where I was goin' to; but yet I'd pretty much made up my mind for the city, in the end. You know you'd told me a good deal about the people there was there, and the streets, and the shops, and the houses. I'd had' it in my mind to go there ever since I'd heerd you talk so about it. I knew there'd be a better chance there than in that dismal old dungeon of a poorhouse, even if there wan't no chance at all. I'd lived in poorhouses all my life, and I felt as if I wanted a change."

"And you've *had* one, too?"

"That, indeed, I have; and a good one, too, I assure you. When I reached the city,—and it cost me some time to git along that fur,—I found I had every thing in the world aginst me. It seemed as if all my troubles come to once. At Byeboro', now, one thing come to a time; but, there, I thought my strength wan't enough for 'em altogether."

"I wandered round the streets, and went into some few houses to git work; but nobody knew me, and nobody seemed to want to. I couldn't give folks no recommend, you know, because I never'd *worked* nowhere. So some of 'em shook their heads at me only; and some said, 'No,' jest as short as piecrust; and

some told me to look out and take good care of my fingers as I went out, or perhaps I might get a home on the island. That's where the long, stone prison is, you know.

"Finally, one day, I come up with a newsboy. He wasn't so big as I was; but nothing did I care for that. He had a right good face; and I felt as if he'd got a *heart*, too, young as he was. So I jest asked him what he could do for me, in the way of giving me a penny or two to get a bite of food. What do you think the little feller did? Why, he told me to come straight along after him. And I did. He took me to where he lived, and told his kind mother about me. She set me up to her own table right off,—bless her soul!—and give me as good a supper as I ever had. And what was more yit, she made me stay all night, too, and a good lot of other nights, besides; and, ever so long after, she put me in the way of gittin' the place I have got, through one of her friends. If ever any body had cause to be glad, it's myself.

"And there's another thing, Milly, that's better than all yit. That woman and little boy said they know'd you through and through!"

Milly started.

"Her name was Stokes; and she said you used to live right in the same house, next room, right-hand side. I never was more struck in all my life; and I've been struck pretty hard with some things, too."

It was impossible for the child to get over her surprise. Nor was her delight any the less to know that her old friend Moll had been the recipient of Mrs. Stokes's kindness, and had been saved from starvation itself by the generous intervention of Billy.

She had a hundred questions to ask about them all;

and, while Moll was answering them, and Milly was listening with intense eagerness, Miss Nancy made her appearance round the corner of the barn, and broke up, for the time, the interview.

## CHAPTER XLV.

### ON THE MOUNTAIN.

DURING Mrs. Trevor's stay at Dovecote, Milly and Moll went rambling over the meadows one pleasant forenoon, careless where the impulse might lead them.

The air was fresh and invigorating, and set Milly's pulses to bounding with a new life. She looked more a little angel than a mortal, as she went skipping and tripping along, her long curls streaming away from her head, the bloom showing on her cheeks, and her eyes kindling with pleasure.

"This is all pleasant," said Moll, surveying the delightful walks over which she took her. "This is as pleasant as the city, I declare."

"Pleasanter!" insisted Milly.

"Wal, I don't know but 'tis. I should *think* you'd be happy here, I'm sure."

They came to a stone wall by and by, to the top of which they climbed; and, perched on this elevation, they sat for some time, talking of their old acquaintance, and admiring the charming scene of the morning. Milly would, in one breath, ask something more about Mrs. Stokes; and, in the next, tell Moll to look yonder and see the little brook swimming down through the rich, green grass.

The notes they had to compare were enough to have held the attention of ordinary business people a much longer time; but there is eminent despatch in young

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spirits, and Milly got far enough along with her inquiries to propose a walk up the mountain.

"Up the mountain?" said Moll. "Where's that?"

"Up that high place yonder," replied she, pointing in the direction of the acclivity.

"Call *that* a mountain? Yes, I'll go. What's up there? snakes and things?"

Her companion laughed, and told her, not snakes, but *folks*.

"Folks!" exclaimed she. "What, *two-legged*?"

"All but the cat," said Milly.

"What do they want to live 'way up there for? Why, it's most up to the sky! I guess they don't want for *air*, up there," she added; "nor thunder an' lightnin', neither!"

Down from the wall, therefore, they jumped, — Moll, as usual, much the more nimble of the two, — and started off across the fields. The sun had long ago dried the dew; and daisies and buttercups begemmed all the plain. Two or three times they leaped across the narrow bed of the brook, as it wound hither and thither, and doubled and turned on its purposeless course, its gay prattle and laughter filling their hearts with nothing but melody.

When they fairly reached the foot of the mountain, they sat down to rest themselves. Milly's cheeks were rosy red, and the eyes of Snarly Moll were swimming with pleasure. They sat and gathered the pale wild flowers that grew at their feet, and made them into bunches for the occupants of the hut.

"Who *is't* that lives there?" said Moll. "You haven't told me. Black, or white?"

"The man is tanned some, I should think," answered the other.

"And what color's the *woman*?"

"There isn't any woman."

"Ain't none! Does the man live alone?"

"No."

"What then? Why don't you tell? I guess it's some evil sperrit up there, ain't it?"

"No; it's a girl, just like you and me."

"A girl! And who else?"

"Nobody but a cat."

"A girl like us live up there alone!"

Moll might well express her astonishment.

"Yes; only she, and her grandfather, and the cat. You don't know what a queer place it is. And such queer *folks*, too! though I like the girl a good deal."

"What's her name?"

"Daisy."

"*That's* an odd name, now, ain't it? Who ever heerd the like of it? Daisy! How odd it sounds! Why, she was named after that flower that grows over in the medder there!"

"I should think so," said Milly. "Any body would."

"But was she *born* up here?"

"I don't know. I never asked her. But I guess not. People say she came here years ago, though."

"And didn't her mother come with her?"

"I don't know. She never told me much."

As soon as they were refreshed they rose to their feet again, and began the ascent. Milly managed to go along with much more than her accustomed ease, owing, probably, to her familiarity with the windings of the path, and, perhaps, in some degree, to the ambition she had in being able to show her former friend an object so worthy of her interest as the hut of old Jarvie.

They paused a moment when they reached the natu-

ral shelf on which the hut stood, Moll giving herself up to the contemplation of the scenery.

"It's an odd place for a hut," said she, in a low voice, as soon as she turned round to the dwelling again.

Milly beckoned her on, and a few steps brought them to the door. So quiet had been their approach, the inmates of the hut heard nothing of it, and received no other warning than that which the bristling back of the black cat sufficed to give.

Daisy was sitting on the bench, engaged in weaving together long strips of striped wild grass. She immediately turned round and recognized Milly, uttering an exclamation of surprise and delight.

The moment, however, she saw another in her company, her countenance perceptibly fell. The eagerness of her welcome was half gone.

But Milly was much too intent on another object of interest to observe this sudden change in Daisy's expression; for over in a back corner, seated on one end of the low bench he had partly drawn to that locality, sat Adam Drowne. Not till Daisy spoke did he look up to see who had come.

Moll was close behind her conductress, and stood on the threshold at nearly the same moment. As soon, therefore, as Adam spied Milly, he spied her likewise.

His eye glared, and his muscles twitched convulsively. It was a little time before he could speak at all. When he did speak, his first words were, —

"Snarly Moll!"

This seemed the harmless explosion of all his astonishment.

The girl was nearly as much excited as himself to meet him under such unexpected circumstances.

"How did you get here?" asked Adam, coming a little to himself.

"Afoot," answered she, with her usual roguery.

"Yes, yes," faintly assented he, wagging his head. "Just the same girl you always was, I see! No change yet! And Milly, did *you* bring her up here?"

She told him that she did.

"Where did you come from, Moll?" he asked her. "I declare, I'd never thought o' seein' you here!"

"Nor I you, either," said Moll.

"It's astonishin', really. D'ye come from Byeboro'?"

"Not lately."

"*You* run away, too!" exclaimed he.

"I couldn't stay after you and Milly come; 'twas too lonesome."

"But what did they say of her goin'? Did they think 'twas one o' the oddest things they'd ever heerd of? Did they say *I* had any thing to do about it? What did they *say*, Moll?"

She told him, as nearly as she could, exactly what they did say.

"As if I could have staid and seen that child suffer there so! I'd worked my fingers off to support her first!" said he.

"So would I," added Moll.

"Would ye?" — Adam looked very much pleased, — "*would* ye? Well, now, you're after my own heart. I'm glad enough to hear *you* say such a thing. But the Byeboro' poorhouse is gone; don't let's think of it any more. Where do you live now, Moll?"

Adam certainly had grown more inquisitive and more talkative than Moll, or any one else, had known him to be before. It seemed to have changed his nature, in a measure, to get free from the influences of Byeboro'.

"I live in the city," answered Moll. "Where do you?"

He shook his head, and smiled.

"It's hard to tell," said he. "I live wherever I happen to be. I live here now."

"But ain't you never goin' back to Byeboro' agin'?"

"Never! It's a good ways off, you know, too."

"I *hope* so," said Moll. "I never want to see the place agin'!"

"Then you run away?" pursued Adam.

"I s'pose I did. I don't know. Any how, I was glad enough to git away."

"And you never have seen any of 'em since?"

"None but Milly and you."

"Where did you find her? Did you know she lived here at Dovecote?"

"I never knew nothin' about it till I come and found her here. I guess I was started to see her sweet face agin'!"

"Same with myself, too. But you look better than you used to."

"I guess I *feel* some better, too."

"Nothing like freedom, is there, Moll? Well, well, I mean to git as much o' that myself as I can. I've always had it, in a measure; but I'll have more *now*. P'raps I'll come and see you in the city before long. Should you like to have me?"

"You can't find the way," answered Moll. "Was you ever there?"

"No, I never was there, Moll. I don't know a soul there but yourself. Do you like it all the time? Don't you never feel homesick, nor nothing o' that kind?"

"Homesick for what? For old Byeboro'? I don't

know where my home is, unless it's where I'm livin' now."

"Sure enough; nor I either. I hope you've got a good one."

The girls at that moment looked up. Jarvie Thatch stood in the door.

He run his eyes quickly about the apartment, and, seeing another little stranger there, said to Daisy, —

"Who's that, now?"

Daisy could not tell him; so she silently shook her head.

"*You* here agin!" exclaimed he, bending his eyes upon old Adam, who still sat with his arms tightly folded about him.

"Yes, I'm here again," quietly answered Adam, not lifting his eyes from the floor.

"And always here!" added Jarvie.

"There's an old mem'ry that draws me," said he. "I can't help it at all. I wish I had other things to do than jest to follow up this mem'ry. It carries me all round the world. It keeps me going, and keeps me wretched. But I can't help it at all."

Jarvie knew well enough what he meant. He fetched a long sigh, dropping the conversation where it was.

As soon as the opportunity offered, Milly withdrew with her friend Snarly Moll, Daisy following after at a little distance. In the woods there was time for all to become better acquainted; and it was a long hour that they sat in the heart of the forenoon shadows, talking on whatever happened to come uppermost in their thoughts.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

### A WALK AND A TALK.

ALL things, whether pleasant or unpleasant, have an end; and so had the visit of Mrs. Trevor. She had already passed quite a week at Dovecote, in which time we all became much attached to her for her unostentatious kindness, and for the general happiness she helped diffuse amongst us.

She seemed especially interested in Milly and in her history. Undoubtedly the sudden renewal of her acquaintance with Moll led to the interest, and then it grew with subsequent investigation and inquiry. Before she took her leave, she had exacted a promise from Miss Nancy to bring the child to town with her during the coming autumn, and Moll had given abundant expression to her delight at the thought of such a reunion.

"*Won't* we have fun, Milly?" said she, her face alive with her feelings. "*Won't* we talk lots, all about the old Byeboro' home? *Won't* we go see Miss Stokes, too, hey? And *won't* she be glad to see *you* agin? O Milly! Milly! to think we got acquainted as we did! How odd it all is to me!"

Before she climbed into the wagon she threw her arms about Milly, and the tears stood plentifully in her eyes.

"You'll be *sure* to come, *won't* ye?" were the last words she could make audible, as they were driven out of sight.

After they had gone, Miss Nancy took Milly with her

to her own room, and there talked with her pleasantly about her friend Mrs. Trevor, and about Moll, and their former acquaintance; laboring to impress her chiefly with the sense of gratitude she should have for her good fortune at last; a matter, in truth, about which a child like Milly needed but a trifling reminder.

A few days afterwards Milly again found Daisy across the meadows, bareheaded, and gathering the wild flowers much after her old way.

"You've come at a good time," said Daisy. "I wanted to see you."

"What for?" asked the child.

"O, 'cause; I wanted to take a walk, you know."

"But you do that every day."

"Yes; but I wanted to have a talk, too."

Milly was going to sit down on a large stone that offered her rest.

"Don't set down!" said Daisy. "Let's go on!"

"Where?"

"Any where. In the woods, out o' this sun. Let's go take a kind of a ramble, you know. There's flowers enough, and there's good places enough to pick 'em. I see cords o' honeysuckles as I come down the mountain; but they were up among the rocks, and in the ledges, and I didn't hardly dare to climb."

Milly was nowise averse to the recreation proposed, and accordingly went along with her. They wound slowly round the base of the mountain, where the trees were few and scattered, and the wild vines crept over trunks, and rocks, and mounds. Keeping in sight of an ancient woodman's road that tracked its way faintly into the forest, they skirted the woodland first, and then plunged directly into its shadowing gloom.

Two girls in a forest, young, and joyous, and full of

wonder, is a sight any eye, with the least attraction for picturesqueness, might well covet. They looked like some graceful deities of the woodland. Their soft voices broke among the ancient forest aisles like the low chanting of nuns in a cathedral. Their forms seemed very slight and airy, as they flitted from a spot of sunshine to a spot of shadow, and then to the glimmering sunshine again; and one might, with little tendency to romantic feelings, have taken them for what they were not.

Here and there they went through the forest mazes, following nothing but their own wayward fancies. Now they stopped to pick a brilliant flower, and now to examine the glittering scales on a rock. At one moment they kneeled on the soft and dark mosses that served them in the stead of a carpet; and at another they were gazing up into the dark and dense boughs of some fine forest ash, garlanded as it was with luxuriant vines and creepers. Nothing could be conceived more dreamy in its tone than the sight of these young children.

At length they grew tired. Their feet followed each other but slowly, and with obvious effort.

"Let's set down now," proposed Daisy.

"Where is there a good place?" asked the other.

"Not here," said Daisy; "but I guess I can find one up yonder. There's a clearing like up there."

So they tugged on a little farther, holding on by the stems of the trees, and by roots, and shrubs, and vines. Sometimes they went two steps backward for a single one forward; but that gave them no cause of despair. They reached the spot they desired at length, quite spent with fatigue, and all out of breath, and sat down upon a decaying log that offered itself for their ease.

"What a view!" said Daisy, pointing her companion off over the distant meadows and plains.

Milly's eyes followed her direction, and her whole soul seemed immediately absorbed with the sight. "What a view, sure enough!" thought she.

There lay a charming landscape, spread out in all its beauty before her. A feeling flashed over her, that it seemed wasted when so few took the pains to enjoy it. Yet it was always there at this particular season, just so rich, and just so thickly crowded with beauty.

In the plain slept the village of Kirkwood, its quiet inhabitants raising no line of dust along their street to tell that human beings labored and trafficked there. The roofs and the chimneys lay half hidden in the foliage; and the smokes that went up curled so faintly as to be scarcely perceptible. Beyond stretched the broad, blue sky, against whose lower rim the horizon leaned, and upon which objects were pencilled with wonderful exactitude.

The crops looked charmingly in the sunlight, the vegetables showing the deeper colors, and the grasses and grains just beginning to glint with their lighter shades in the drifting breezes. The trees wore their densest foliage and stood like plumed sentries, dotting the plains. There was nothing but beauty on all sides. The child took it into her eyes, and absorbed it into her soul. She sat there like one bewildered; and only the sight of her intoxication had the effect to bind Daisy with an influence but little dissimilar.

In the midst of this thoughtful silence a step was suddenly heard from the thicket beyond. The parting of boughs betrayed the approach of some one; and both the girls turned round to look. Milly was the most startled.

"It's granf'ther, I guess," said Daisy, in a low voice.

"No," replied Milly, looking a moment longer; "it's Mr.

Brimmer! It's the minister!" And she jumped to her feet, and clapped her hands for delight.

He came pat upon them.

"Milly!" he exclaimed, for the first time catching a view of her, "you started me. I didn't know that you were here. And who is this other little girl here with you?"

"That's Daisy," answered the child, Daisy herself casting her eyes downward.

"Daisy? The girl that lives in the hut?"

She told him it was.

Mr. Brimmer thereupon sat down beside them. He took the flowers Milly had gathered, and looked at them every one, calling them severally by their proper names. He asked where she had gathered them all, and how long it took her, and if she understood their language.

She had not heard before that flowers had language.

So he began to explain it to her, and to Daisy as well, talking of their various expressions, derivable in some cases from their shapes, and in others from their colors, and in others still from their names.

Then he talked, in his extremely pleasant and instructive way, of the landscape, pointing out colors and contrasts in the distance that their inexperienced eyes had never seen before; dwelling on the benevolence of the great Author, who has made his creation for beauty as well as for use; and lifting up their youthful minds, imperceptibly almost, as by some silver cord, to the heaven that was above all.

They thought they could have sat and heard him thus go on for hours, so mild were his words, so genial seemed his sympathies. But he was warned already of the necessity of his departure, observing that he had only come for a climb on the mountain, and must be

home again. But he promised Daisy that he would one day visit the hut; and made her promise, too, that, if he could break down the prejudices of her grandfather, he would allow her to come to meeting every Sunday.

At that place Daisy took her leave, moving off into the wood. Mr. Brimmer took Milly by the hand, and led her gently down among the rocks and trees, telling her all manner of pleasant things as they went along, and asking quite as much about her friend Daisy; and it was getting really late—for Milly, at least—when they crossed the old meadow below and finally reached the long avenue that conducted to the homestead.

Milly felt that the day had been another among the happy ones she was now notching so steadily on her calendar.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

### A VISIT FROM THE DOCTOR.

BUT no one's happiness is perpetual. No living person holds a lease of health or a stable guaranty against disease and trouble.

In little less than a week Milly was prostrate. At first, and not long after her unusual exertion in climbing among the woods, it was but a trifling complaint of the strange feeling in her head, of excessive weariness in her limbs, and of other unpleasant symptoms of that nature. No one was led to suppose any thing serious threatened; as, at that time, there did not.

But day by day the trouble became more fixed, and assumed decided shape and form. A little after she was obliged to sit in the great easy chair, braced and bolstered by pillows. And her face was very destitute of color, and her eyes looked expressionless and heavy, and her little white hands hung without any strength over the ends of the chair arms.

"Where do you feel worst?" Miss Nancy would ask her.

"O, every where—all over! I'm so weak! I'm so sick!" she would answer, while her beautiful blue eyes filled with tears.

Her tears, somehow, never failed to bring them into the eyes of all the rest of us, Miss Nancy not excepted. She looked so little like a mortal all the time, and so much like an angel.

"I think of mother so much!" she would say almost in a whisper.

No one had a reply for this. It was a subject none could venture to approach.

"Would you like to see the doctor?" she was asked, one day, when her symptoms grew more threatening.

"Will he do me good?" she inquired.

"We hope so," said my mother and Miss Nancy together. "He will, if any body can."

Still she doubted, and shook her head rather despondingly, as if it was to but little purpose.

Never seemed her face so radiant to us as after disease had fastened itself upon her. There was such a strange, an unearthly, look in her eyes, we almost feared to let our gaze rest upon them. They betrayed the anxiety of her thoughts, as well as the deep tenderness of her feelings.

The village doctor came. His narrow carriage looked ominous to us all. There seemed something unnatural in his being called for Milly. If he had come to see any one of the rest, there can be no doubt of its being received as all in the due course of things; but with our Milly it was different. And yet none could tell how or why.

He drew his chair up beside her great chair, and took one of her hands that depended from the chair arm into his own. For a moment or two he tried to make it appear to her as if he was simply glad to see her and would shake her by the hand. So he entered on pleasant conversation.

"This is the same little girl I see at meeting, isn't it?" he asked her.

"Yes, sir," faintly answered Milly.

She tried to smile as she spoke; but the smile

died with the effort, and her face seemed sadder than ever.

"But how happens it that she is sick to-day?" he continued, still keeping up his calm and pleasing tone of voice. "Has she been eating something she shouldn't?"

Miss Nancy answered for her, that she was not well enough to eat any thing.

"Then she's taken sudden cold, I guess," said the doctor. "I'm sorry, sorry!"

He shook his head as he repeated the word "sorry;" and Milly's eyes filled with tears.

For a moment or two, now, he preserved silence. He was counting her pulse, though she was the last one to suspect that such was his design when he first took her hand. Its beating was exceedingly rapid. It troubled him so much to number the strokes, that he finally took out his great silver watch, the more easily to notch off a minute with the help of that.

He was not a little startled himself at the alarming nature of the symptoms. She showed her tongue in obedience to his request. He looked steadily, and his opinion was settled. It was easy to see, even then, that he considered her a very sick child.

After a brief time, he rose from his seat and walked slowly across the room in the direction of the window.

He motioned Miss Nancy towards him, and for many minutes continued holding a consultation with her. He took papers from his little leathern bag, and divided and subdivided powders, folding them again in smaller papers. Then there were a great many directions to give respecting the particular modes of treatment that should be followed, and cautions to be added, and

hopes to be expressed, after that, for her speedy recovery.

He went away; and Milly's countenance fell more than ever.

"I don't like to take medicines," she said to Miss Nancy, though in no tone of complaint.

"But when the doctor says they will do you so much good; and you'll get entirely well," returned Miss Nancy.

There was nothing more to be said. If it was best, she was not the one to offer opposition. So the medicines were bravely swallowed, and all the doctor's directions obeyed to the letter.

Her days seemed very long to her, and she told of her increasing weariness and exhaustion. We watched her anxiously, her pale face buried in the white pillows, itself even whiter than they. Whenever we came into the room she had something pleasant to say, and many questions to ask about the fields, and the garden, and the flowers.

She seemed to like to talk, above all, about her dead mother; and she kept the attention of Miss Nancy enchained by the hour with her childlike sayings.

"She seems to be before me now," she would say, "I think of her so much!"

"But you always have, haven't you, since she died?"

"Yes; but I *feel* so different about her now."

"Well, how different, my child? Does she seem any more dear to you than she used to?"

"She seems *nearer*," answered Milly; and lost herself in a brief instant of reflection.

"She loved you, Milly," said Miss Nancy; "and we have tried to take her place to you."

"I love you, Miss Nancy. I love you all. How can

I help it? You have been so kind to me, and done so much for me."

"We are glad to know it has been done for one so deserving. That is a great satisfaction, my child."

"I *dream* so much of my mother," continued Milly.

"What do you dream about her?" asked Miss Nancy, smoothing down the hair over her forehead, and looking into her eyes with ill-disguised emotion.

"O," said Milly, "I see her face before me so plain; and she seems to have the same smile on it I remember so well; and she holds out her hand to me, and beckons me to her, too. I hear her speak to me just as she used to; and her voice is so very pleasant in my ears. She tells me how much she thinks of me still, and how closely she watches over me, and what a hope she has that I shall see her again before long."

"But this is only *dreaming*, you know, Milly!"

"It's so pleasant for me, Miss Nancy, to dream such things."

"You shouldn't suffer them, however, to influence you so much as to make you unhappy. What you dream in your sleep has nothing to do with you when awake."

"It isn't *wrong* to think so much of these things, is it, Miss Nancy?"

"O, no, my child; but then it's not for your good to think so much of them as to make you *unhappy*."

"Do you think they do make me so?" asked the child.

"You sometimes make me think they do. Isn't it so?"

"They make me the happiest I can be. They bring up the old times to me again, and I think of what we once suffered, and how much I enjoy now. O, I only

wish mother could have had all this pleasure with me!"

"It was meant for your best good, Milly; you must think of that."

"Indeed I do, Miss Nancy. I think of it all the time; and I say to myself, 'How thankful I should be for the good fortune and the kind friends that have been given to me!' I try all the time to be thankful, Miss Nancy; but I cannot help thinking of my mother, too."

"No, you should bear her ever in mind. She nurtured you when you were a helpless infant, and it is to her that you owe a debt of large gratitude. None of us can ever hope to repay our mothers for their care."

"And it's so *pleasant* for me to think of her, too," continued the child, "though I look the saddest when I am doing it. I seem to be talking with her again, just as I used to when we were so poor, and lived in that single room, in the city. And her face has just the same look for me, and just the same smiles. I *love* to think of her so much. How can I help it, Miss Nancy?"

"You cannot, my dear," said she.

The eyes of both of them were suffused with tears.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### THE FAITH OF A CHILD.

SHE grew worse rather than better, and soon the great easy chair was vacant altogether.

The little patient was stretched on the bed.

She had been placed in Miss Nancy's chamber, where, rapidly as her strength diminished, she still cherished her old fondness for the flowers, and the leaves, and the grass. Every day we gathered the most brilliant wild flowers that could be found in all the meadows and on all the hillsides, and, mingling their colors with those of the garden blossoms,—roses, and honeysuckles, and border blossoms,—we made them all up in luxuriant bunches, and carried them into her chamber.

Her sick face lighted up with the sight of them at once. She would put out her hand, and ask to take a bunch into it herself. And then she carried them to her face, snuffing up their choice fragrance with manifest delight.

But how very pale, beside those deep-red roses, looked her face! and how dim seemed her eyes, compared with the bright tints that nestled among the flowers!

She had many questions to ask about the school and the old playmates, feeling already as if she had long been estranged from them. Her thoughts ran on all those in the village whom she knew, of whom she had

something at various times to say. Her mind was very clear, and her memory more than ever alive. She talked as a child of her years was not expected to talk, astonishing those much older and of more matured characters than herself.

Every morning she asked to have her chamber window opened, and to be braced in her bed with pillows, that she might drink in the glory of the day. Her eyes wandered over the limited landscape, now upon the dense masses of foliage that hung upon the trees, and now upon the gray and mossy rocks that lay scattered here and there, and now upon the green lawn that stretched itself, carpet-like, beyond the house. She held the flowers in her hand, alternately admiring them and the view through the window.

And again, at evening, she went through the same pleasant exercise; for exercise it was, not less to her eyes than to her feelings. The rich tints of the sunset; the golden hues of the foliage; the sombre shadows, shrinking away within the trees, as if they were yet a little too fast in their approaches; the gilded mosses that clung to the rocks; the distant walls and fences; and the lanes, leading away through the meadows and pastures,—all these crowded on her brain with constantly increasing pleasure, while yet they tinged her evening thoughts with sadness.

At this particular part of the day it was that she delighted to let out her heart in conversation. She was free to tell all her feelings, and often expressed them in a style of frankness and tenderness that failed not to moisten the eyes of those who heard her.

One evening, while she was in just this mood, the minister came into the room, following Miss Nancy. She turned her eyes round slowly, and caught sight of his face. Immediately her own lighted up with joy.

"Mr. Brimmer, Milly," said Miss Nancy. "He has come on purpose to see you."

The good minister sat down by her bedside, and took one of her white frail hands within both his own. His emotion was visible enough, as he sat down beside such an innocent, with the feeling so heavy upon him that she could not be much longer for earth.

"How do you feel to-night, Milly?" he asked her, his voice betraying his deep feeling.

"O, I'm so happy!" exclaimed the child. "I love so much to see those evening clouds! They are full of pleasant dreams!"

"They tell me you are very sick," said Mr. Brimmer. "Do you suffer much, my child?"

"Not when I'm so happy," answered she. "No, I don't think I suffer any thing."

"Patience is a great virtue," he went on. "It will carry you safely through a great many trials. But patience cannot be *truly* patience, unless it proceeds from a rightly-disposed heart. I trust you are reconciled to whatever may be in store for you, my child. If it should please God to take you to himself, you feel ready to go; do you not?"

"I wish I was better," said she, after a moment's thoughtfulness.

"Do you ever think of dying?"

"I think of it all the time," she answered. "I sometimes feel even glad to think I may be so near through."

"Do you pray for a spirit to be contented with whatever may come, whether it be life or death? Do you pray to have your heart humbled still a thousand times more, that the good seed may take deeper root?"

"I love to say my prayers," she answered. "And Miss Nancy is so good to pray with me, and to talk

with me, too. I always feel that my heart is better when she is talking with me."

"And you love your Savior with all the love of which your heart is capable?"

"Indeed, Mr. Brimmer," said she, in great simplicity, "I try to love him more and more every day."

"Well, that is right. That is what you ought to do. But what do you seek so much to love him for?"

"Because he has done so much for *me*. Because he even *died* for me. How can I *help* loving him? How can I help trying all the time to love him more?"

"You cannot, if you think on what he has done for you as you ought. Indeed, the more your mind is fixed on him, the more your heart will learn of gratitude. And with gratitude to God comes deep piety, and trust, and simplicity, and humility. These all grow out of this one feeling. You are right, my child, in cultivating it as you do. Should you like to have me read a little to you from the Bible?"

"Yes, sir; I should like it very much."

Mr. Brimmer thereupon took the Bible Miss Nancy handed down from the shelf, and opened at random. His eye fell on the eighteenth chapter of St. Matthew; of which he read aloud the first half, containing the reply of Jesus to the question of his disciples — "Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

And afterwards he repeated other passages from memory, and among them that solemn injunction from Ecclesiastes: —

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

"While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain."

The words, as they came from the lips of the minister, sounded to Milly unusually full of meaning and impressiveness. She drank in the syllables with delight; and when, at one time, he appeared to hesitate, as if he might task her little strength too much, she earnestly begged him to go on, telling him that all this was a very great comfort to her.

So he kept reading, selecting passages every where from the good book that is so full of comfort for us all.

When he had finished, the sun had set. Milly still sat braced with the pillows, and her hands were folded calmly over her breast. Her eyes were closed; yet she was not sleeping; she was withdrawing her soul from all outward influences, and in silence communing with her own peaceful and happy heart.

"I shall see my dear mother, too," at length she said, breaking the silence that well nigh seemed sacred. "She will be there, too."

"In heaven," said Mr. Brimmer, "all friends in Jesus will be reunited and made happy again. There will be no more tears in that blessed place. The heart will have nothing more to wish. Its measure of bliss will be full."

"Shall we *know* our friends in heaven?" she asked him.

"We have every reason to believe we shall," he answered. "It is a very consoling hope, that God allows us to entertain. There will be no more *night* between us there; and all darkness will flee away."

"The last thing my dear mother told me, the night before she died," said Milly, "was, 'Only leave all your trials with God, and do your duty yourself. Keep my memory fresh in your heart. You will never forget your dear mother, will you, Milly?' And from that day

I never have. She has been in my thoughts every hour since. I *have* left all my trials with Heaven, and been rewarded for it. O, I am so happy! I feel that I shall soon see my dear mother again."

Mr. Brimmer soon after knelt down by her bedside and offered an earnest prayer. Every petition she as earnestly preferred after him. Every word seemed to feed her soul. When he arose again, and turned to regard her countenance, he found it as serene as the sun that had but a short time before gone down behind the horizon.

He talked with her a little while longer, loath to leave a scene in which his own heart took such deep participation; and altogether satisfactory, too, save for the saddening influences that hovered about it.

When he finally took his leave, he stooped down and affectionately kissed Milly, promising to be with her again very soon, and enjoining it on her to reconcile all her thoughts to the event that might be so near at hand.

He passed down through the dining room to the front door; and all could see that his eyes were blinded with tears, that fell upon the floor at every step.

## CHAPTER XLIX.

### UNFORESEEN.

THE days dragged heavily for us all. How could it have been otherwise, when one so dear to us was stretched on a bed of suffering, and, perhaps, of death?

No one found the inclination to do any thing. All our energy seemed smitten with a sudden palsy. Sad countenances met each other every where we went about the house—at the table, in the entries, on the stairs. There was vivacity on no hand. Each day the gloom grew deeper, as if the pall let itself down still lower upon our heads.

The sick child all the while grew weaker and weaker; and with her wasted strength appeared to come purer thoughts, and gentler feelings, and loftier purposes. If ever a human being seemed purged of her material nature, she was that one.

She never forgot one of us, however, in all her own trouble. Each day she repeatedly asked for us all, and would have us come to her bedside and talk with her, and kissed us affectionately as we went sorrowfully away.

The doctor's increased anxiety was sufficient warning of the imminent danger that threatened. He came oftener, very much oftener, now, and staid longer with her, and had a great deal to say to Miss Nancy and the rest in whispers. Those whispers were exceedingly ominous. And he had, in his own deep sympathy, told

some people in the village more than he would tell us of the case, pronouncing it an extreme one, which nothing short of a providential interposition could well turn into a favorable aspect.

Mr. Brimmer failed not a day. He generally came twice a day, when he could, and cheered the mind of little Milly with his calm words about death, and heaven, and happiness. She listened always to him with rapt attention, oftentimes with her eyes devotionally closed, and her hands folded as in prayer. It was touching indeed to behold her resignation.

One day, when her pulses seemed to be at their lowest ebb, and her breath seemed to have grown fainter than ever before, a wagon drove up to the door, and a man and a boy leaped to the ground. Their manner was, apparently, not a little excited, and neither stopped to fasten their horse, leaving it just where they got out of the wagon.

The man knocked smartly at the door, the boy standing close by his side.

Miss Nancy herself happened to be at hand, and so immediately answered his summons.

"This is Dovecote?" inquired he, in much haste.

"It is," replied Miss Nancy.

"There is a little girl living here, then?"

"Yes, sir," said she, "several."

"But *one*—a particular one; her name is—is—is Milly?" What made the man hesitate and stammer in that way? "Milly is her name, ma'am; or *was*, once. Is *she* here? Is *she* living here?"

"There *is* a child here of that name," returned Miss Nancy.

"Then I want to see her! I want to see her *now*!"

"But it is hardly prudent, sir. She is lying very low at present, and will hardly recover."

"What do you tell me?" exclaimed he, his face becoming exceedingly pale. "Sick, is she? Very low? Then let me see her without another minute's delay. It may even be too late if I am put off now!" And he motioned to pass in. The boy kept all the time close at his side.

"But I do not understand, sir. What is the occasion of——"

"I *beg* you, don't put me off at a moment like this with questions! Only show me the way to her. Let me in at once. It may be too late. She may be dying now. She may be dead before I can see her."

"Are you related in any way to her?" inquired Miss Nancy, struck with the excited manner of the visitor.

"All that you shall know by and by. You shall hear a full explanation. I *beg* you, do but show me the way at once to her bedside. I am in a frenzy to see her!"

She had nothing, therefore, to do but to conduct him as he desired. He was in such a state of excitement, that to attempt to talk with him were little less than folly.

Along through the passages and up the stairs they went, Miss Nancy leading the way. She walked a-tip-toe, fearing lest she might wake the echoes that had slumbered there so long. Arriving at the door of the chamber in which Milly lay, she cautiously opened it, whispering to the stranger as she did so, "Make as little noise as you can!"

The moment they entered the room the stranger's eyes fell on the pale and dying face of the sufferer. No one seemed to observe that the boy had likewise come up stairs with him; and he followed close behind,

regarding every object intently. As soon as the stranger saw that the child was likewise looking steadily at him, he walked quickly up to the bedside and kneeled down, taking her hand.

"Milly! Milly! Milly!" exclaimed he, and burst into tears.

As might be expected, the heart of the child was filled with wonder and astonishment. Her eyes were fixed on him, trying to understand what he might mean.

"*My child!*" exclaimed he in a broken voice.

"What do you tell her?" asked Miss Nancy, becoming suddenly as excited as he.

"My *dear* child Milly," he continued, "I have done you a great wrong indeed! I am a wretched man, that I have been the cause of all this misery for others. Forgive me, child! Do not die before you have forgiven me!"

There was a pause. Milly was silent. She knew not what to say. She was utterly ignorant what it was expected of her to say. Her breathing became very rapid, and the color flushed her cheeks.

"Milly," said he, "you are my daughter. I am your father, whom you have never known."

"My father!" uttered she, in a soft and slow exclamation.

"Yes, my child, I am your only living parent. Your poor mother is dead."

It cost her a marked effort to comprehend the whole meaning of what he said, in its length and its breadth. She pondered upon it for a few minutes. Her brow was clouded as with an untold trouble. She rallied her faculties, her memory especially. The thoughts of her mother, that chased one another in such quick succession across her brain, were now shaded with

strange misgivings, such as she had never felt before, and that she could not describe.

"You never knew a father, Milly," he continued, seeing that her feelings pained her acutely. "You never knew what it was to have the protection of a father's love."

"No," she answered faintly, "I had only my mother to love; but I loved her with all my heart. I shall see her soon."

"I did you great wrong, Milly; and this is my punishment. While you were yet an infant I left you and your mother, hoping her brother would help her. I had myself become discouraged. It seemed to me as if there was no other way but to sink down and die in the conflict. I could not provide for your mother as I would, and so I left her cruelly to her fate. It *was* cruel indeed, Milly; and many a long hour of suffering have I since had in return for it."

"But what did you go away for?" asked she, scrutinizing his countenance in a manner that made him almost quail before her.

"Because I was a *coward*, child; and for no other reason."

"Mother got through it, though."

"And I should have gone through it with her! I should have protected her as long as she would stand at my side. I should have done all that I could do, and left the whole to Heaven. But I was too *cowardly* for that! I lost my patience. I grew morbid. I thought that the world was arrayed against me; and so I meant to get out of the world, as far as it was unpleasant to me."

"But you have come back again?"

"I took the first opportunity that offered to sail to

South America. There I lived a wretched life for a long time. I was even more downcast than I had been at home. But matters took a sudden turn. Things looked better for me. My prospects brightened. I saw golden chances before me, and I was feverish to seize them. I prayed only for success, that I might return to my wife and child, and for the rest of their lives do nothing but make them happy. And success came at last—as much of it as I had prayed for—more than I had ever dared to expect. I clutched my fortune eagerly. I was ravenous to get and enjoy it all. It was now in my hand. I could feel it. It made my heart glad to count it over and over. And then I came back to my wife and child, hoping that Heaven had suffered them to wait patiently my return.”

He paused with his growing emotion, and, with a strong effort, controlled himself. In a moment he went on.

“When I had reached the place where I had left you both, you were not there. I made diligent inquiries for you; but you were not to be found. No one knew any thing of you, except that your mother had, with an almost broken heart, taken you away where neither of us were known.

“Next I made indirect inquiries respecting your uncle Trevelyn, hoping she might have gone to him, and finally found the home and happiness I could not give her beneath his roof. But even her own brother knew nothing of her. He had not so much as heard of her.

“I sought the town. There I watched and wandered. All the while I felt myself but a miserable pilgrim. I was in search of the shrine of my affections—my wife and child. As for home, that was long ago

desolate. My unannounced withdrawal threw down a chill and a gloom across the hearth.

“For a time all my inquiries and searches were to no purpose. No one seemed to have heard of either yourself or your mother. You, who filled *my* heart, were not so much as thought of by the tens of thousands through whose busy midst I crowded my way. You must be drowned in the noisy whirlpool of life, if you had ever been thrown into it. And so I gave you up, and thought I saw in my great disappointment the proper reward of my cruelty.

“As I sat one day brooding over my wretchedness, undetermined what to do next, or where to go, a little boy stepped before me, bearing a bundle of papers under his arm. His voice sounded very pleasant on my ear as he accosted me, and I thought there must be something interesting in one who spoke in such a tone. I looked up from the floor, and my eyes fell on his face.

“‘Will you have a paper this morning, sir,’ said he. I regarded him a moment before I answered him. Finally I purchased one. ‘If I could only get any news of *them* from it,’ I said to myself, as I unfolded the paper. He looked at me with more interest than ever. ‘Of who?’ said he. I told him of whom. And then his eyes kindled so strangely, and his face lit up with such a pleasant and intelligent expression, that I was strongly excited. While I looked at him he said again, ‘I know all about ’em!’

“I seized him by the arm. ‘All the money you want,’ I told him, ‘is yours, if you can give me any intelligence such as I desire!’ Then he began and went through his narration. I was thunderstruck. Such astonishment had never seized me before. He told me

if I would follow him he would put me on the track I ought to pursue at once.

"We went to his mother's. She was an honest but a poor woman, and delighted to make known to me all that she had ever known herself of you. She said that you had lived under the same roof with her—right in the next room. You cannot measure my excitement and anxiety. I wanted to hear all; yet I was troubled with a terrible fear. I urged her, however, to tell me the whole, without reservation or delay.

"She made known to me your mother's sickness and her death! That was what I most feared. And now, I thought, my punishment is upon me! God help me to bear it all!"

"Mrs. Stokes!" faintly exclaimed Milly. "Good Mrs. Stokes!"

"Yes, it was she; and this little boy was her son."

"Billy Stokes!" Milly said again. "I loved him."

"He took me immediately to still another place, where an acquaintance of his lived. It was a young girl whom he called Moll. She lived with a Mrs. Trevor."

Miss Nancy, deeply excited with the scene, at this point could not help assenting.

"Mrs. Trevor was away, out of town; so I begged the girl to tell me all she knew. She described your life at the poorhouse, after you had been sent there from your aunt's, and the love you so soon inspired all the inmates with. She told me of your sudden departure, no one knew whither; of her own flight afterwards; of her coming to the city; of her sufferings, and the kindness this same good Mrs. Stokes showed her, too; of her finding a home with Mrs. Trevor, and her

visit with her to Dovecote; of her great surprise at finding you here again; and of her return to town, and telling Billy Stokes and his mother the fortunate discovery she had thus accidentally made.

"I was too impatient to hear more. From her I received the only intelligence I got of your existence, or of the place where you lived. I took the boy with me, and set out for Kirkwood without delay. And here I come to find my child—the last earthly hope of my heart—so near her end, and so happy in the prospect before her! Was ever a father's cruelty more severely punished?"

"Where did you leave Billy?" asked the child.

He had sat down on a low stool at the foot of the bed on first entering the room, where he was now silently weeping.

"He is here," answered her father, going to him and leading him up to the bedside.

"Billy! dear, good Billy!" said Milly, extending her hand for him. "I am so glad to see you once more before I die! I want to see your mother, too. She did so much for me once, too! Why do you cry, Billy?"

The boy could not speak to answer her.

And there all stood around her bed, their hearts stirred with emotions that no pen is able to describe. Joy and grief were both mingled as in that old homestead they had never been mingled before.

## CHAPTER L.

### THE BREAKING OF THE GOLDEN BOWL.

SHE had several long conferences with her parent after this, at each one of which his heart received lessons that would last him to his grave. Man that he was, he was wholly in the power of the gentle and resigned spirit of a little child.

Billy Stokes, too, had much to learn from her lips of his duty to himself, his mother, and his Maker. She talked with him in the tenderest manner, and proffered him advice and precept that sank into his heart like seed into a good soil. His deepest sympathies were moved, and gushed freely for her as the crystal flood leaps from a fountain.

The minister came in, too, and sat with Milly and her father, talking in his calm way about the unexpected reunion, and the ground of hope for another and a closer union above. His words affected the father exceedingly.

Now her strength failed faster than ever. The seal seemed to be finally set. One and another came into the room, gazed anxiously at her dying look, and went out again to give way to their tears.

It was late in the afternoon, when the sun shone aslant on the trees, and the clouds began to pile in the west, and the odors drifted in refreshingly through the open window, that she thought she was going. She called us all around her, and had a word to say to every one, taking leave of us as calmly as if she were only

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setting out on a short journey. The room resounded with sobs and moans.

She begged us not to weep; *she* was happy. No one could tell *how* happy. There was not an earthly image that could adequately set forth the serenity of her mind. Heaven itself would be the nearest it; and it was there she believed, and we all believed, she was going.

Calling her father closer to her, she threw her wasted arms about his neck, and kissed him again and again.

"O, forgive me, my child! my child!" cried he, the hot tears dropping from his eyes.

"I have nothing to forgive," said she. "I am so much happier to see my father before I die! Only promise me, father, that we shall meet again!"

His heart was melted. The flint had been broken.

"I will hope to," was all he could reply. "I can only pray for strength."

"And if you pray right, father, you will have it. No one ever asked in vain. The Bible tells me so, and it tells you so. But I want to ask you one other thing," added she.

"What is it, Milly?" he asked. "Whatever you ask, I will try and do."

"I have got another friend, who doesn't know how sick I am; if she did, she would be here."

"Shall I go bring her? Shall I go? Where is she, Milly?"

"No," said she; "it is too late now. She wouldn't get here. But I want you to make me a promise about her, father."

"Any thing my dear child may ask. *Any thing.*"

"She lives in the little hut on the mountain," said Milly, her voice failing her rapidly. "Her name is Daisy. I love her so much! I want you to make *her*

your child when I am gone, and try and love her for my sake. She will take my place in your heart. Will you, father?"

"I will! I will, Milly!" he hastily answered, eager to gratify even the least of her dying wishes.

"And good Mrs. Stokes," said Milly.

"I will make her comfortable for your sake!"

"And kind little Billy, too."

"Yes, and him, too! They shall none of them suffer!"

"And there is aunt Trevelyn," added Milly. "She was harsh to me; but I forgave her. Will you tell her that I am dying so happy, and that I bless her with my last breath? Will you go see *her*, too?"

"She has been so unkind!" suggested her father.

"But her heart knew no differently then. She must feel another way now. She has had her trials, you know. We must forgive her, father."

"I promise — I promise to do every thing as you desire, my child!" replied the afflicted father.

"Then I shall die happy. O, what a relief it all is!"

The minister asked her if he should pray with her, to which she expressed immediate assent. And thereupon Mr. Brimmer offered up to Heaven a petition for her, for her friends, and for all, the rest joining on their knees, with hearts ascending on each solemn and fervent word.

When they rose to their feet, she only said, in the faintest voice that could be audible, —

"Good by! I am going home! Good by!"

And she was gone.

Her breath went out like the dying flame of a candle, with no struggle, no noise, no moan. Like a tender flower, she was in a single moment transplanted to a fairer garden.

We stood about the bed, awed into silence with this sweet and speaking picture of death. There was no terror in it all; no gloom about it; no fear hanging over it, to convulse the heart with a shudder. It was as peaceful as the slumber of an infant.

When the little green mound was raised over her body, and the mourners for the gentle child had gone home again to their griefs, the father of Milly went up the mountain, in company with Billy Stokes, to carry out the last wishes of his dead child.

It was high sunset when they reached the spot, and the view, to any but a heart bruised with sorrow, would have been enchanting. But neither of them paused to enjoy it. They moved straight forward to the hut, following the path in which they had been directed.

Both came to the door at once, and looked in. The black cat bristled and hissed, and Jarvie and Daisy looked up. The former was sitting down over a little fire he had kindled preparatory to cooking some fish he had just brought in for his supper.

As soon as he saw the man who stood in the door he sprang to his feet, his eyes flashing fire. The eyes of the stranger kindled hardly less likewise.

"Villain! robber! thief! Have you followed me even *here*? Do you dare invade the quiet of this my solitary home?" cried old Jarvie, moving about his arms, in his strong excitement. "Why did I not strike you dead in the streets? Why did my arm fail me just then? Robber! villain! At least, you shall pay the price of your crime *now*! You shall go where you have sent the heart nearest my own — to the grave!" and he advanced upon him.

"Hold!" cried the other, in a voice that thrilled old

Jarvie, and made him stand in spite of himself. "Be calm! Only be calm! You know not what harm you may do!"

"I know what I wish I once *had* done," said Jarvie, "when I met you, after so long a search, in the streets!"

"William Branch," sadly began the stranger, "I have done you in my lifetime as foul a wrong as man ever can do another! Let me hasten to acknowledge it."

"That you have!" interrupted Jarvie, — whose name was but a fiction of his own, after all, — his threatening tone a little mollified already by the gentler manner of the other. "You've done me a wrong no man can right!"

"Let me at least try. I have come to you only for that. I have come to your lonely hut to tell you that I am willing to make the fullest amends I can for my injuries to you."

"It's too late!" cried Jarvie, still more softened. "Why didn't you come before? What made you stay away till my child died? till you'd broken her heart, and laid her in the grave? Do you *blame* me for trying to kill you in the streets? Does *any body* blame me? Wouldn't they try to do the same thing themselves?"

"I say nothing of that now," returned the visitor. "Let it go. It is better to do so. I treasure no hard feelings, William Branch, for any thing you may have done."

"And well you *mightn't*, I tell you! *I'm* the wronged one, and you are the aggressor! Who *should* lay up the hard feelings, pray?"

"I hope neither of us."

"You expect a good deal, let me tell you! It ain't in human nature!"

"Let me tell you what I have come to tell you. My child has just died in the house at the foot of this mountain — my only child."

"No, no, no!" exclaimed Jarvie. "Speak the truth now, let the shame strike as it will!"

"The last expressed wish of my child was, that I should take your little Daisy in her stead, and do by her exactly as I would have done by Milly."

"A thing you'd ought to ha' done *long* ago!" interrupted Jarvie. "It was a great wrong — a *cruel* wrong!"

"I would not rob you of all that is left to gladden your heart, but I would do my duty while I am in the way of it."

"My little Daisy is all the lamb I have," said Jarvie.

"And unless I have her, *I* have none either."

"What better do you deserve than what's fallen on you?"

"Nothing — nothing. I confess it freely to you. Nothing at all. I have done wrong; let me make it right again while it is in my power. I will do all I can to make up to you for your suffering."

"You can never hope to do any thing, then. No tongue can begin to tell the wretchedness of my life. I've tried to live it down in the solitudes; but the solitudes won't do it. And in the crowds of men in the streets there is more solitude than any where else. I can live only here; and life here is bitter enough, though I try to keep all my sorrows to myself. Nobody can share 'em!"

"At least," returned the other, "let *me*. Let me take from your shoulders a part of the burden you carry."

"And you want Daisy?"

"That was Milly's last wish."

"And when you take Daisy, instead of making my load lighter, you make it heavier—you rob me of all I've got!"

Jarvie began to forget his passion, and fell to musing, casting his eyes down on the rough floor.

"You shall be made comfortable wherever it is your pleasure to live. Only suffer me to adopt this child for my own. I will care for her as you would yourself. She shall have all the advantages that money can furnish. She shall be instructed in the best schools, and introduced into good circles. Her prospects shall be as fair as those of the wealthiest."

Jarvie slowly shook his head.

"And I live alone here on this mountain?" said he.

"No; you shall have your home just where you will. I have *money* now, which once I did *not* have. You shall not suffer. I will provide."

"Ah! this sounds more as it should!"

"And whatever can in the least add to your happiness you shall ask for without reserve. You shall not be left alone. The child shall come regularly to see you, if you like."

"But that wouldn't do after she'd got into other ways. I might want to see her when she didn't know it; but it wouldn't do for *her* to come where *I* live. I could watch my chances, though. I should know how she was gettin' on."

"And, then, will you consent to what I ask?"

"You ask a good deal. I want time to think; and much thought, too."

"I know I ask a great deal; but my sense of duty impels me to more than I was ready at one time to undertake. Give me the girl, and I shall exert myself to see that all three of us are happy. Keep her yourself

and *one* of us, at least, will be miserable always. Which shall be done?"

"Let me think, let me think, I say. It takes time to settle such a thing as it should be."

It was miraculous what a thorough revolution had thus been wrought in his feelings by nothing but a free confession on the part of him who had wronged him, and a desire to cancel the injury at the earliest moment. The law of forgiveness was exemplified in its fullest extent.

Not until then did the eyes of Jarvie rest on the piercing ones of Billy Stokes at the door. The boy had stood there all this time, silently studying the character of Jarvie, and wondering within himself at discovering that Milly's father, after all, was the same man whom Jarvie had so desperately assaulted. Well might he wonder.

"There's my little friend agin!" exclaimed Jarvie. "There he is! *He* brought me comfort when nobody else did!" And he sprang forward to grasp him by the hand. Meanwhile the father of Milly walked in and sat down on the bench, and began to regard Daisy with a look of affection.

"I always *thought* we should meet agin!" said Jarvie. "Why didn't you *speak*, and tell me 'twas you? What made you stay out doors? You don't know how glad I am to see you up here. How did you come?"

"With him," answered Billy, pointing to the other.

"Did *you* know little Milly, too? She used to come up on the mountain pretty often to see Daisy. Did you know Daisy?"

Billy told him that he did not; but another—Moll—had told him all about her.

Then Jarvie entered upon a long talk with him, ask-

ing him questions at random about the town and all that was going on there. They sat down near the door, and had it to themselves.

And Daisy was answering the questions that were put *her*, too, always speaking of Milly with deep feeling, as if her love for her had been sisterly indeed from the first. Little thought Milly, however, of the secret affinity that held them together!

The bereft father strove to find his way to the girl's heart by means of gentleness and promises. It would be, perhaps, a long work with him; but he might accomplish it at the last, fulfilling to the letter the dying wish of the dear Milly, whose memory now would live fresh in his heart as long as it beat.

In so short a space, how great was the change in the aspect of the rude old cabin!

## CHAPTER LI.

### CONCLUSION.

THE peacefulness, however, was not long after broken by the entrance of another. Adam Drowne presented himself at the door. He looked in shyly, and said to Jarvie, in a suppressed tone, —

"Got more company, eh?"

"Yes," returned Jarvie, "*he's* the one." And he pointed over his shoulder in the direction of Milly's father.

Adam's eyes were fixed on the stranger with an altogether new interest. He studied his features long and closely.

"What *of* him?" finally asked he. "Who *is* he?"

"Ah, Adam," said Jarvie, shaking his head, "you may well ask who he is! Perhaps, as you say, you wouldn't been miserable if it hadn't been for him!"

"Aha! aha!" exclaimed he, in a voice little above a whisper. "What does *that* mean? Did *he* ever see Mary? Do you mean that?"

"That's *jest* what I mean."

"*He!*" said Adam again, pointing at him with his finger.

"He was the one she loved so much."

"*He! he!*" continued Adam, still pointing, and his eyes flashing under the control of his monomania.

"What's he *here* for? Let me kill him! Why don't

"You kill him? You've been hunting after him this long while; why don't you kill him?"

All this exciting conversation as yet was unheard by the subject of it, who sat talking with Daisy in the back side of the apartment. His face was not turned exactly to the door, and he could not see, therefore, that another person had just come up.

"He's after Daisy," said Jarvie, in answer to Adam's questions.

"Are you goin' to let him *have* her? Shall you do such a thing as that? *He* come and rob your heart agin!"

"He's Milly's father," added Jarvie.

"That man! A man like that the father of my poor, dear, dead Milly! I don't believe it!"

"But that won't make any difference, whether you do or not, I guess. He's offered to come here and make up for what wrong he's done——"

"And are you goin' to *let* him? Are you goin' to harbor such a villain as that?"

"He don't talk like a villain *now*. His other little girl's death, I guess, has quite broke him."

Adam dropped his eyes to the ground, and sighed, "Poor Milly!"

"If a man's willin' to do right, after he's done so fur the t'other way," said Jarvie, "who'd want to hender him? That would be as much out o' the way as he is!"

Adam looked uncommonly dejected and sorrowful.

"He's full of bruises about his heart, I guess," said Jarvie, "and I ain't the man to want to batter him more'n he can well stan'. If he's sorry,—and I guess he really is,—why, then, I'll forgive him. I pity him now."

"I can't think such a man's the father o' my Milly!"

said Adam, crossing his hands behind him, and studying the ground still.

"But there ain't no doubt of't, though, in *my* mind. Here's little Billy,"—pointing to the boy who sat near him—"he's seen it all, and *he* believes it. Don't you, Billy?"

"Yes, sir, I think he really is," answered the little fellow.

Adam gave him another searching look.

"Then Daisy'll go too!" mused he, running his eyes off over the landscape, through whose juicy green the little creek was running, and winding, and flashing. "You'll lose *her*, too! And there'll be little or nothing for me to come up here for—no child to make me think of her dead mother when I look into her sweet face—nothing but you and that awful black cat. It'll be jest like the grave up here—no sound of any body's voice, no laughter, no little feet to patter round on the hard old floor. What will there be for me to come to see? How can I set down on the rocks out o' this door, and do nothing but *think*? How can I *live* under it all? *I can't!* and there's no use in wantin' to, either!"

The spirits of the poor, wandering lover had hitherto been measurably kept up by the presence of the girl, who reminded him so much of the object of his earlier affection; but they were bruised and broken now. His aims seemed suddenly gone. His hopes sunk like a flame in the darkness.

"Then this is my last look at her," said he, regarding Daisy with a melancholy look from the door. "She calls up her mother's image again; though it will never die out of my heart. Let me take a good look."

So he stood there gazing at her for many minutes Jarvie and his young friend kept silence all the

while. The boy was lost in wonder at what he saw; and when he glanced at the persons around him, and then let his eyes swim over the landscape, and again thought of Milly and all that had happened to her since her departure for her uncle Trevelyn's, he could hardly think that these things could be real, but felt as if he might be acting a part in some strange dream.

"That's all!" muttered Adam Drowne, slowly and sadly withdrawing himself. "I never thought this would come about, though!"

He turned to leave the place. No one asked him why he went, or whither he was going. The same piece of driftwood on the current of the world that he ever had been he would continue to be. He would follow the same courses, the same old paths, the same half-matured plans. He would be a waif for his whole life.

Next morning, as a man from the village was fishing among the leathery leaves of the lily-pads in the little river, spinning his lines over and around their shadows for the lurking pickerel, he started at discovering a strange object thrust upwards through the tangled mass of green. So plainly it showed, there could be little room to hesitate as to what it was. His eyes were riveted to it, in spite of the feeling of horror that made him so faint.

The object was a human hand, sticking up, stark and stiff, as if for assistance, when assistance was no longer to be had!

He immediately gave the alarm, and scores of the villagers hurried from all quarters to the spot, with ropes, poles, stakes, and hooks. They secured the object in sight, and, with difficulty, brought it to the shore. As

they drew it out, they saw that the body was that of a man.

But no one could tell who he was. No one had ever seen such a being, either in the village or on its outskirts. And while the common doubt was ruling, old Jarvie himself came strolling along, spinning his own hook, in quest of his morning meal. He was attracted to the crowd, and cast a look on the face of the drowned man.

"I know him!" he at once said.

"Well, who is he?" all asked him at once.

"His name's Adam Drowne. He's been out of his head some this long while. He used to come up to my hut a good deal," returned Jarvie.

The despondent and despairing lover, seeing hope after hope vanish before his eyes like some desert *mirage*, at last committed himself to the step that his feeble mind told him would bring him rest. In the stillness of the summer night he had jumped from the little bridge in among the frightened fish, and the blackened logs, and the sedges, and the grass; and there, with face upturned to the sky of midnight, he breathed out his soul to the stars, hoping, in his weakness, for some other life, where the heart would be whole, and where no bitter waters should be given the suffering soul to drink!

The bubbles had risen to the gurgling surface, as Death drew him finally down, and broken in the midnight silence, one by one, leaving no trace of the deed that was concealed below.

The poor wanderer was sick of his life, and foolishly plunged into another, of which he knew even less than of this.

The proper arrangements were speedily consummated between Jarvie and the father of Milly, and Daisy went away to live with her new protector. It was hard parting from Jarvie; but he knew it would be for her highest good in the end, and cheered her by repeated promises to see her often.

And so Daisy came to supply the place of Milly, finding in the stranger only the parent whose tutoring care she should have had years before.

Billy Stokes and his mother were placed in a comfortable little snuggerly just out of the metropolis, from which Billy went in every day to the new occupation his friend had found for him. She talked much of the gentle Mrs. Markham to her son; and explained to him the final advantages that grew out of honor, let the present prospects be what they might from following a contrary plan.

And Mrs. Trevor cared well for Snarly Moll; giving her a better home than she could elsewhere have expected to find, and seeing that she received such instructions only as would most surely and substantially promote her happiness in the world.

Nor was poor Mrs. Trevelyn forgotten, with her pitiable children. The hard features of her case became instantly known to those other actors in this little history who were able to assist her, and at their hands she became the recipient of favors and kindnesses that lifted the gloom from her heart, and gave her renewed strength to meet the ills and trials of life.

As for Byeboro' — but let that be forgotten, with its dismal poorhouse, its swarming paupers, with cruel and heartless Caleb Flox, and poor old Ponce, the disabled hero, and Crazy Jane, who kept up her senseless prat-

tle as long as she lived — and all the rest. They call up dreary thoughts, that no healthy heart would give a place to.

All these are among the versicolored memories of old Dovecote. There is that rosy tint still hanging over the roofs; there are those streaks of sunshine streaming through the windows across the floor; there are those same white and blue smokes, sailing up from the chimneys to the sky; and these memories intertwined with them all, like threads of light, azure and golden, that are swiftly flying on the shuttles of thought through the life-warp.

The glorious home sunrises and the gorgeous sunsets are but living pictures all, off of which the heart may feed and never be full. The white moonlight glimpses of the evenings are but soft and tender murmurs in the sensitive ear of memory, filling its chambers with lulling melodies like the music of flutes.

Far apart as this and the old time are, I can see the red sunset burning in the western windows, and gilding the crests of the towering elms. The entire spot is in-framed and set about as with burnished gold. And there the heart loves to rest itself, far from the dust of life's highways, where nothing but peace sleeps ever in the leaves, and nothing but balm drops down from the branches.