

LAURE; OR, THE BLIGHTED LIFE.

# LAURE

THE

HISTORY OF A BLIGHTED LIFE.

BY

L. C. H. [all]



PHILADELPHIA:

CLAXTON, REMSEN & HAFELFINGER,

819 & 821 MARKET STREET.

1869.

*Not in Phila Directory*

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PRINTED BY MOORE BROS.

Dedication.

TO MY ONLY DAUGHTER.

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## LAURE; OR, THE BLIGHTED LIFE.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE FARM-HOUSE.

MY father was a prosperous farmer who lived in the lovely village of St. Jean de Blanc, which was about thirty leagues from Paris. The farm-house, which was our family dwelling, was large and commodious, and was built upon a slight elevation overlooking broad fields of wheat, which waved like a green, billowy sea when the summer winds flew over them, or melted into the yellow sunlight of autumn like an inherent part of its brightness, so golden and glowing they were in their ripened beauty. From the cultivation of an extensive grapery, my father derived his chief support, which was also an ample one. He was a man of steady and regular habits, just and upright in his dealings with all men, but of a severe and unyielding disposition, which sometimes rendered him somewhat *unjust*. My mother was of gentle blood, and my father never forgot the relative difference of their social position, or became reconciled to it. This question of the distinctions of the social scale was a constant source of trouble between my parents. My mother longed for the luxuries with which she had been surrounded in her youth, and which my father was unable to supply; the refined tastes which she would have delighted to exercise, he could not indulge or gratify. Irritated perhaps by the continual strife upon this subject, he went to the other extreme, and

became almost miserly. He also held peculiar ideas with regard to the education of his children, claiming that a common-school education was all that was needful, especially for the girls, who could not possibly require any deeper, or more extensive knowledge than that taught at the village school. At this time I was one of five children—my parents having three sons and two daughters. I was of a joyous, happy disposition, although I was very proud. I well remember my intense mortification at being obliged to attend the village school, while some of my young companions, whose parents were really not in as comfortable circumstances as my father, went to the academy at Orleans, which was just across the river.

One morning in June—that lovely month which is the brightest jewel in the crown of the year—when Nature seemed to be bathing her weary limbs in a shining bath of crystal dew, I went skipping along the pathway which led to the school, with my book open in my hand, and studying as I hurried on my way. So intent was I upon learning my task—which was my catechism—that I ran almost into the very arms of a lady who was coming toward me, and who, seeing me so absorbed in my task, had playfully extended them in order to catch me, saying, as I stopped in surprise, “Well, rosy-cheeks, where are you going in such haste?” I had never seen the lady before, and as I looked upon her I thought that she must be like the angels; for I had never beheld so beautiful a being—but this is not the place in which to describe her. She asked me many questions about my daily life; and when I, wondering at her interest in me, had answered them in an embarrassed manner, she said, “Poor child, if you were only under my protection, you should go no more to the village school. Come with me;” and, taking me by the hand, she led me into a little store close by, and, calling for writing materials, wrote a short note, which she bade me take to my father. Forgetting school, I flew home rather than ran; for my feet seemed to have been suddenly gifted with wings. I no longer noticed the soft,

dewy beauty of the morning; for I was filled with wonder and amazement, and asked myself over and over again, as though I were capable of answering my own question, “Who can the lady be?” I loved her already for her beauty; for I had an intense and appreciative delight for physical loveliness in all its forms; but more than all, I adored her for her sweet, caressing manners. I did not dream that the note which I carried in my hand imported a change to me, which would influence my whole after-life. I soon learned its contents; for my father read it aloud. It was very brief; for the lady simply solicited an interview, appointing for it the following day, and signing herself “S. de Simencourd.” This name we recognized at once as that of a lady who had recently purchased the “Pavillon”—a magnificent castle formerly belonging to the estate of M. de Fascale, and which was situated only three miles from the farm. I slept but little that night—I know not why—but the morning came at last, and with it, at an early hour, came Madame de Simencourd. I had anticipated her coming with delighted expectancy, and, with a child’s desire of doing something to express my delight, I went to the garden to gather flowers, wet with the dew, and with the rich fragrance exhaled only to the shadows of night still lingering about them, in order to make a bouquet which I might offer to her. When I returned to the house, I found Madame de Simencourd sitting by my mother’s side, with her hand clasped in hers, while my father was standing before them. I perceived that my mother was weeping. Madame received me with a tender caress—tender alike to me and to the wet flowers with which my hands were filled—and called me her “little darling.” She had come, she said, to make a proposition to my parents, which she hoped they would receive kindly and entertain favorably. She had long since conceived the idea of adopting a little girl, who would be to her as her own child—whom she would love and cherish, educate and provide for in all respects, as though she were in truth her very own. This desire of fulfilling the sacred office of motherhood had never reached

fruition; but upon meeting me the day before, she felt that perhaps the time had come in which to consummate her cherished plan. She had seen me several times before, she said, and longed to take me to her heart and home. Would my parents listen to her? My father, with little hesitation — with unseemly haste rather, acceded to her wish. I think my father loved his sons better than he did his daughters, for he always seemed to think the most of their welfare; and I have no doubt that his manifest willingness to part with me was actuated by the idea that I would no longer be an expense to him. But my mother wept bitterly, for the mere thought of separation from me was a terrible one to her. I was her favorite child, and she could not, would not part with me. Madame de Simencourd, seeing the anguish caused by her words, cried hastily, "Oh, Madame, forgive me! I know the agony of parting with a child must be great indeed; but I thought I could make her so happy! My life is very desolate. I have no children — no husband — no one to love; and your little daughter is already very dear to me." My mother could not speak. My father, after vainly urging her to assent by signs and gestures unseen by Madame de Simencourd, abruptly left the room in evident anger and displeasure. Madame, finding that all her entreaties were in vain, begged that my mother would consent to my going to her for one or two years, during which she would superintend my education, secretly hoping, if this desire was acceded to, that I would become so fond of her that I would refuse to leave her to return to my parents. My mother would only promise that she would see her the next day, when they would converse further upon the subject. Madame de Simencourd then left, seeming to derive from this promise the hope that she would partly, if not wholly, attain her object.

The matter was finally arranged upon the condition that I was not to be separated entirely from my mother, but was to see her as often as I desired; which wish was made practicable by the near proximity of Madame's residence. My

mother was induced to comply with these conditions — a reluctant consent to them being extorted from her by my father's arguments, which amounted to commands — rather than won by the urgent entreaties of Madame. The ordeal through which she passed was a severe one, for not only were her affections wrung and wounded to the very quick, but the shock received by her pride, which was great, was also a fearful blow.

With the exception of my eldest brother, François, who was attending the military school at Orleans, we were all at home, and when I went to say "good-by" to my two youngest brothers and my sister Elise, (for Madame insisted upon my accompanying her at once,) I encountered a painful scene. Our parting was most affecting, for, although we knew that the distance between us was but small, and that we should see each other very often, yet I believe that we all felt that the separation was a final one — final, at least, as regarded all the close intimacy of home connection — the sweet communion known only to those who dwell under the same roof, kneel at the same family altar, and receive from the same loving lips the good-night kiss of a mother. My dear sister Elise! how she wept and clung to me, and how hard it was to part with her. At last the "good-byes" were said, and I accompanied Madame to her home — that home, how strange it seemed! which was henceforth to be mine, and which was beautiful beyond description. I cannot now live over again my childish delight at the sight of the magnificent furniture, elegant curtains, beautiful and costly paintings, and groups of statuary, but I can vividly recall my unrestrained, passionate exclamations of delight and rapture when I first saw the superb garden. It was like a scene of enchantment — like something of which I had read in my fairy-tale books, of a wonderful garden in Dreamland, which, it seemed to me, had been mysteriously dropped here at my feet. I wondered if the art of magic had been employed to transport me to the land of the sun; and, in short, had many doubts upon the subject of my own identity, which were not satisfactorily

resolved for some days. A beautiful parterre of flowers was arranged on terraces, one above the other. A silvery fountain of water was dashing its myriads of sparkling drops back into its white marble basin, which resembled a huge lotus-blossom, with its broad, white leaves spread out upon the ground; tall trees were bending beneath the weight of luscious fruits; a splendid conservatory was crowded with rare exotic plants, which seemed to diffuse the breath of the tropics through the rich, warm atmosphere. Bright-plumed birds brushed their soft wings against my hair as they flashed swiftly past; in short, all the surroundings of this elegant mansion were perfect and lovely in the extreme. And the mistress of this charming domain was well worthy of it. Her beauty was of a regal type, for she was tall and singularly graceful. Rising proudly above her superbly rounded shoulders was the most beautiful head that I have ever seen in actual life. It was of the classic Grecian mould, perfect in its contour, and crowned with shining auburn curls. To me this was her principal charm. Her face was calm and lovely, and was the true index of her gentle, loving heart. She lived alone, under the protection of her aged father, who resided with her, and with whom I soon became a great favorite. I was also very fond of him, and delighted in his kind caresses and pleasant words, and always ran quickly at his call of "*mon petit cœur*," which was his pet name for me. At this time I was but ten years of age, but Madame made me her constant companion, by night as well as day, and our morning and evening prayers were offered up together. She taught me various kinds of useful and ornamental needlework, and during the two months that intervened before I was sent to school, my life was so bright and beautiful that, even now, when I look back after all these years of grief and sorrow, the light of that sunny time comes stealing through the shades of the dim past like a glorious ray of sunlight into a darkened room, from whence the corpse of one beloved was but lately carried out.

## CHAPTER II.

## AT SCHOOL.

AT the expiration of two months, Madame decided that I should attend the academy, which was but a short distance from the castle. This was an institution patronized only by the nobility and people of distinction, and I felt that I had attained the very acme of human happiness, for all my wishes seemed to be on the point of realization. I was only a day-scholar, for Madame desired that I should never be long from her side; and the constant companionship and hourly intercourse with one so good and noble as my kind friend, could not fail to improve the mind and elevate the ideas of so susceptible a nature as mine. I was quick and impressible; I had inherited much that was refined and delicate from my mother, but I had also something of my father's sturdy independence, together with a capacity for endurance, a tenacity of purpose, and a keen sense of right and justice. It was but natural that, at my age, my mind should grow and expand under any circumstances; but, as the golden orange, which attains only a dwarfed and stunted growth in the forcing-houses of the north, blooms in bewildering fragrance, and ripens to perfect fruit under the warm, glowing sky of the south; so, under the kind genial influences of my new home, made beautiful by the glorious sun of love and the warm light of affection, my mind expanded and blossomed in luxuriance and beauty.

For many months my happiness was complete. I had not a wish ungratified; and my love for the beautiful and extravagant was encouraged to full development. The greatest pleasure that Madame possessed was in adorning and petting me, as if I were indeed her own idolized child; and the dark thought that a change might come over my joy never intruded itself to mar my pleasure. Oh, enchanting life for-

ever gone! Could I but live over again one of its charming days, oblivious of all the sorrow that has nearly overwhelmed me in its deep waters since that blessed time, I would joyfully give in exchange a whole year of my present dreary existence. Like a bright dream it passed, and like a dream it ended.

I had remained with Madame but little more than two years, when the first dark shadow of my life unfolded its cold, gray wings above me. Madame was obliged to return to Paris, and consequently made her arrangements for this change of residence without informing me of it, for she thought no obstacle would be placed in the way of my accompanying her, and it would be a pleasant surprise for me. She sent for my mother, and renewed her solicitations that she might adopt me, and thus insure my remaining with her; but my mother decidedly refused, saying that she could not voluntarily consent that her child should give to another for a lifetime the love and duty which was due to her alone, or call another than herself by the sacred name of mother.

The distress of Madame was extreme. With clasped hands and pleading voice, trembling through tears, she urged her heart's desire to my mother, over whose pale, wan face a thousand conflicting emotions passed, as she sat with one arm thrown around me, gazing longingly into my eyes, and anxiously awaiting from me some demonstration of my own inclination. Oh, what could I do? Abandon my own dear mother, who had loved and cared for me from infancy, and whose deep, unselfish affection had ever met my demands for love with full supply? Oh, base, ungrateful thought! And yet, there was Madame, to whom I was so tenderly attached, and to whom I owed so much that my burden of debt seemed heavier than I could bear, or than the gratitude of a life could repay. The situation was a painful one, and my distress was almost uncontrollable. At last, they both appealed to me, determining to abide by my decision. My mother, with the tears rolling down her sweet, pale face, said: "Laure, will you return to me or remain with Madame?"

I could not speak; but my decision was quickly made, for

the agonizing character of the scene admitted of no hesitation. With one mute, appealing glance for forgiveness and forbearance at Madame, I threw myself into my mother's arms, and burst into bitter weeping. Madame was grieved to the very heart, but not offended; for she knew that the trial through which I had passed was severe for one so young, and her judgment applauded my determination while her heart deplored it.

I was now obliged to bid adieu to my teachers and school-mates. I had made many friends during my attendance at the academy, and, giving heed to the wise counsels of my good friends, had endeavored to improve all my time. At parting, the principal placed in my hand a testimonial, which was both kind and complimentary to me; and my happiness in giving it to Madame was enhanced by the proud consciousness that I deserved it; for I had been very diligent, and had excelled in all my studies. Madame was extremely gratified, and expressed her approbation by loving terms of endearment, and many tender embraces.

The sad hour of our parting drew near, and would not be delayed for all our tears and sighs. I could not endure to be absent one moment from Madame, and she clung to me as if dependent upon me for all that made her life bright and happy. I wrote a little note to her, which was a childish way, indeed, of conveying to her the words of gratitude and love my trembling lips refused to utter, and on the last day of my stay with her, I placed it upon her dressing-table, where she would find it after I was gone. Thus it ran:

"DEAR MADAME:—Two years ago I undertook a sweet duty, a loving obedience, in giving to you the fond affection of a daughter. I cannot express to you how tenderly, how devotedly I love you, and how every fibre of my torn heart quivers and bleeds at this cruel separation from you. And if heaven grants the prayers and supplications with which I shall daily besiege it, tenfold the happiness you have given to me shall be bestowed upon you. If my future be bright, I will still look back upon these beautiful days in the sun-

light of your love, as possessing a brightness never to be equalled; and if the days to come are filled with gloom, then will the memory of this happy time illumine my sorrow, making for me a glory that shall steal the bitterness from my tears, and shedding over me a gentle influence that shall last forever. Your loving child, LAURE."

The desolate, unhappy day came at last, and nature herself sympathized with my grief, and mingled her tears with mine. The rain came down in torrents, even as the tears fell from my eyes; and the skies were as heavy and leaden as my own heart. And when, for the last time, I was folded in the arms of my beloved friend, and received the last kiss from her lips, the last glance from her tender eyes, my foreboding heart whispered to me that I should never see her again—that she was lost to me forever; and I returned to my father's house, filled with a fear and a sorrow for which I could receive no comfort.

Madame started the next day for Paris; but she left for me this little note, (which I can never forget,) hastily but tenderly written:

"MY DEAR LITTLE GIRL:—I leave you with a sore and weeping heart. Think of me always; love your parents—they are yours. I have no longer any power over you, save that which my spirit, unseen, may possess over yours. May its influence remain with you; for I love you. Do not forget the prayers I have taught you. You will be in my heart forever. Your, loving friend.

"S. DE SIMENCOURD."

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE CHANGE OF RANK.

THE change from the life of elegance and luxury, which I had been mine for those two short years, to a life on the farm, was great indeed; but, in the constant companionship of my dear mother, and my brothers and sisters, it were strange if I did not soon recover my natural cheerfulness: outwardly, at least, I did so; but the sadness in my heart remained unchanged, although it found no expression. Had I been younger, or older, the impressions made by this change might have been weaker and more quickly effaced from the surface of my being; but, standing as I did upon the threshold of womanhood, I lacked the philosophy of maturer judgment to aid me in throwing off the remembrance of all the influences that had combined to make that period of my life one long, blooming, glorious May. It was but natural, also, that I should feel discontented and miserable at the change from the elegant seminary, with its refined and classic surroundings, to the plain, little school-house, with its bare, whitewashed walls, its dingy paint, and groups of untidy, ill-kept, common-looking children. But, after my grief at parting with my old friend had become somewhat softened by time, my joyous and elastic nature recovered its buoyancy and brightness, under the charming rule of natural affections and the simple pleasures of home, as a field of green and waving grain that lies crushed and bent, after a terrific storm of rain and hail has passed over it, lifts its bowed head once more beneath the revivifying influence of the glorious, soothing sunshine.

My sister Elise and myself studied together very diligently, and my ambition and pride were gratified at receiving the dis-



tion of being considered, in the little school, the most excellent scholar. I applied myself closely to my studies, for I fully realized that I had no time to lose; I was growing rapidly, and would soon bid adieu to my school-days and my childish associations. At this time my father seemed to grow fonder of me, and this fact gave me much happiness. It was rare for him to bestow a caress upon any one of his children, but he would sometimes lay his hand upon my head, and stroke the hair from my forehead, and once he called me his "charming child." I can even now recall the touching sense of delight which this unexpected term of endearment from my father gave me. But I will linger no longer among the simple scenes and pleasant ways of my childish days, but will hasten on to a later period.

Among the acquaintances of my father was M. Eugène Pinaud, a wealthy wine-merchant of St. Jean de Blanc. He was a friend of many years' standing, for I remember well that he came often to see my father when I was only a little child; but of late his visits had become much more frequent. We were all much attached to him, and always glad to see him, for he invariably brought a gift to Elise and myself. I did not dream of regarding him in any other light than that of a friend, and a very old one at that, for he was well on the shady side of thirty, and consequently I treated him with all the saucy, careless freedom of a spoiled child. Imperceptibly, however, his manner toward me became more devoted and more lover-like, and I would often amuse myself by repeating to Elise the pretty compliments and the tender, sentimental speeches that he made to me, with much comic exaggeration and merry laughter. When we were alone I would exultingly say to her that now I was to be regarded as a person of considerable importance, and that it would be well for her to consult me and ask my advice in her *affaires de cœur*; for did I not possess a lover? Was I not being wooed in the most approved fashion? But, with all my joking, I did not seriously dream that there could be any significance attached to his altered manner and numerous

attentions: I thought rather, that my own imagination was magnifying them, and interpreting their meaning to suit its own merry caprices. But soon—too soon, alas! I was roughly awakened to the unwelcome knowledge that I was no longer a careless, happy child, defying conventionalities and the stupid restrictions of society, but a maiden, subject to the stern control of a father's will in all that related to the disposition of my freedom and my future, and to whom that future had become an object of consideration.

It was the evening of my fourteenth birthday, which my parents were celebrating by a handsome entertainment, to which many guests were invited. M. Eugène appeared at an early hour, and not seeing me at once, inquired of Elise: "Where is Mademoiselle Laure?"

I was just outside of the window, which opened to the floor, and heard his question. He carried a beautiful bouquet of violets in his hand, and as I sprang impulsively into the room through the open window, I imperiously extended my hand for them; but he put the bouquet behind him, and said, with a low bow:

"No, no, Mademoiselle; I cannot give you the flowers unless you permit me first to kiss your hand."

I laughed and blushed, for I was embarrassed—I know not why; and, turning to Elise, I asked:

"Shall I permit M. Eugène to take his pay before he gives me the violets?"

Elise endeavored to relieve my embarrassment by promptly saying:

"No, no, Laure; Monsieur will be generous."

M. Eugène did not persist in his attempt to bargain with me, but smilingly gave me the bouquet; and as I thanked him, I detached a small spray from it, and placed it in the bosom of my dress. The look of pleasure in his face at once pained me and renewed my confusion, and I quickly regretted the thoughtless act of coquetry; but, child as I was, the impression vanished as soon as made, and I only now recall the trifling incident to prove how very careless and innocent I was.



The evening wore on; many merry games were played, in which I heartily joined, and then dancing occupied our busy, restless feet, that kept time to the measure of the dance as our thoughts throbbed to the music of youth and pleasure. Refreshments came in their proper place, and to the utmost I enjoyed this last happy evening of my thoughtless, careless girl-life.

Just before the close of the entertainment, when our guests were about departing, my father called me into my mother's room, which was the council-chamber where all our family consultations were held and our private matters discussed. M. Eugène was there—at which I wondered—standing with my father beside a small table, on which was placed champagne and glasses. My father filled his glass, stepped forward, and, taking my hand, said to me, in a kind manner:

"My daughter, I am well pleased to see your manifest partiality for Eugène, and I resolved, an hour ago, to anticipate, by a few months, the announcement of your betrothal. Yes, my child, you have been engaged to M. Eugène Pinaud for two years."

I was completely stupefied; my father continued talking, but I heard nothing. I thought of the bouquet, and of the spray which I had so coquettishly placed in my dress but a few hours before; and instinctively my hand sought the unoffending flower, tore it from its fastenings, and threw it on the floor. M. Eugène made a step toward me; but I rushed past him without a word and sought my mother, who was in an adjoining room. Throwing myself into her arms, I gasped: "Oh, mother! I cannot—I will not marry that man! Help me—oh, help me!" My mother lovingly soothed and petted me, whispering, as she gently strove to quiet my excitement:

"Hush, my child, and try to reconcile yourself to your father's will; for I fear you cannot turn him from his purpose. There is nothing left for you to do but to submit and obey him."

Even in my dire distress, this conciliatory advice from my mother did not surprise me; for she was ever a mild and gentle creature, and passive as a slave in her implicit obedience to the stern rule of her master; but I felt strengthened by the sweet consolation implied in her tender caresses, and passionately exclaimed: "I will die before I will marry M. Eugène!"

What now I would have said I know not, but at this moment my father came in, and taking me by the arm with his strong hand, led me back to my guests; saying, in a stern manner that quieted me far more effectually than all my mother's caresses: "Control yourself, Laure, and let me see no more of this childish behavior—go back to your guests, and be gay and cheerful. You are a child no longer." Ah, how my outraged heart recognized the truth that I was indeed a woman, and must suffer like one. I obeyed my father; and, practising my first lesson in dissimulation, I tried to laugh and jest as before; but the spell was broken—the vase was rudely shattered, and the flowers drooped and withered. I felt that trouble overshadowed me, for the sweet obedience which it had been my delight and pleasure to render to my parents I could no longer yield. Strife had come between us, suddenly, and unexpectedly; our wills were at issue, and my heart said firmly, while my lips trembled: "I will not yield, I will not be conquered."

I did not dance again that evening, though often importuned; and once by M. Eugène himself, who also, I observed, refrained from dancing. What a relief it was to me when I had said adieu to the last guest, and was permitted to seek the silence of my own room. There, in the darkness and solitude, many troubled thoughts came to me, new and unwelcome visitants; but the gentle angel of sleep, who had hitherto come nightly to my bedside, and held my senses in a charmed trance of dreams and visions until daylight frightened her away, came not to me through the long hours, and morning found me wakeful, weary, and rebellious.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE DREADED MEETING.

AT an early hour, the summons of my father which I had been both expecting and dreading, came to me. He was awaiting me in my mother's little *boudoir*. As I entered I stole one glance at his face, and trembled at its stern, relentless expression; but my heart was undaunted, and did not quicken its beating. He seated me upon the lounge beside him, and said:

"Well, Laure, have you thought—" I quickly interrupted him, throwing my arms about his neck, and drawing myself close upon his bosom:

"Oh my father, I know what you would say, but I implore you do not let the words leave your lips. If you value my happiness—if you—" he roughly threw me from him, and commenced pacing up and down the room. After a little, he said abruptly:

"Speak on—I am listening."

I could only murmur a few unintelligible words, for I saw that he was very angry, and that he would not heed my sorrowful objections. At last, calming himself with an evident effort, he came and sat down beside me, and said in a gentle voice:

"Laure, I am deeply pained to find you so obstinate, so regardless of my wishes, and so indifferent to the advantages which this marriage will give you." (As if one so young as I then was, ever weighed pecuniary advantages against the bright glowing dream of love.) With an eloquence which I did not know that he possessed, and to which I now listened for the first time; my father painted in glowing colors the luxuries and elegancies with which a husband so wealthy and indulgent would surround me. Every wish should be gratified—I should have a residence in Paris, money in unlimited amounts

at my disposal, parties, balls, a box at the opera—and, in short, my life would be one constant round of pleasure and delight. But to all the pictures of dazzling splendor which he so deftly drew, I could only answer:

"I do not love him—oh father, do not make me marry a man I cannot love—who is utterly distasteful to me."

"But my child, you will learn to love him; he will be so kind, so indulgent to you that you cannot withhold your affection from him."

Feeling convinced that all my prayers would be in vain, that nothing I could say would induce him to relinquish his purpose, I said:

"Father, you seem to have set your heart upon having M. Eugène for a son-in-law; why not give Elise to him? She is older than I, and he would not have to wait so long as he would for me."

"No, my daughter, it is your happiness that I seek. Do not trifle with me," he angrily exclaimed.

"Oh, my dear father, if you do indeed regard my happiness, do not, I implore you, insist upon this marriage."

"No, my child, I cannot, and I will not yield to your unreasonable whim, and give up a hope which I have cherished for years, and which I command you to fulfil, knowing that by doing so, you will secure your own happiness as well as mine. Accept M. Eugène graciously and willingly when he comes to speak with you. It is my will."

Without another word he left the room, and with an aching heart I sought my sister Elise, and together we went out into the open air, for it seemed as though I should stifle in the house. We directed our steps toward a little *charmille* and sat down under one of the trees, listening to the birds who sang merrily above us in the branches, as if mocking our wretchedness. Elise knew all, but she could not assist me—she could only weep with me.

As we returned to the house we came suddenly upon our father, who was standing by a small artificial pond, looking down into its crystal depths. He was evidently waiting for

us, knowing that we would return that way, and calling me to him, he said:

"Laure, M. Eugène is waiting for you—go to the house at once;" and bending on me a stern and warning look, he walked away in the direction of the grapery.

It was in the lovely season of the grape-harvest, and of wine-making, a season hitherto replete with enjoyment and gladness. The rich, warm aroma of the luscious fruit seemed to linger on the air, and penetrate to one's inner sense of all sweet things, until the consciousness of all outer beauty was merged in fragrance. The evening sky was blue and cloudless, and a soft sense of life fulfilled seemed pervading the whole atmosphere, as if summer, satisfied with the result of her labor was taking a season of rest before her final departure from the valleys and the hills.

How often had I helped to pluck the rich fruit that hung in huge bunches from the vines that seemed o'erwearied with their burden, piling it high in tall baskets, which I would attempt to balance on my head, as I had seen the laborers do. But now the charm was gone, and the life and enchantment had died out from the scene. My first impulse, on hearing my father's words, was to run back into the woods, and hide myself there; but I saw that he was looking back at me, and, impelled by the long habit of obedience, I went slowly forward, feeling desolate and wretched. M. Eugène met me with so kind a manner, so expressive of forbearance and amiability, that I at once conceived the hope that an appeal to his generosity would not be in vain.

"Mademoiselle, why do you avoid me? You used to be very fond of me, or else I have deceived myself. What have I done to change your feelings toward me? You know that I love you—can you not, in return, think kindly of me?"

His pleasant face and appealing eyes bending so earnestly above me made me hesitate before answering him.

"Monsieur, I have loved you, it is true; but it was only with the innocent affection of a child, and it is only that affection which I can give you. I do not—cannot love you

as you desire. Let us return to the other love; for, believe me, it is unwise to frighten it away. Let me be again your 'little child'—you are deserving of a better fate than to marry one who does not love you."

He took my hand and raised it to his lips; but with a deep blush, I hastily caught it away. He drew himself up with hauteur and an air of wounded pride, and said:

"Mademoiselle, why do you thus repulse me? Have you so suddenly conceived so great a dislike to me that you will not permit me to touch your hand?"

I was silent, and sat with drooping head and flushed face, testifying to my deep embarrassment. I did not know how to frame the request I desired to proffer; but soon I ventured to say:

"Monsieur, grant me the request I am about to make, and promise me that you will not inform my father of it."

With a look of astonishment, he replied:

"I will promise anything, Mademoiselle, anything that you require."

I thanked him, and raising my eyes to his face, said, nervously:

"I fear, Monsieur, that you will refuse me when you know the favor I am going to ask of you; but remember, you have promised, and on that I rely."

Again I hesitated; but on M. Eugène's saying, gravely but gently, "Proceed, Mademoiselle," I gathered courage, and frankly and candidly impressed upon him, with all the eloquence which I could command, (and my intense feeling gave strength and vigor to my words,) my total inability then and always to give him the love which he desired and deserved; that if I married him, I should do so only in forced obedience to my father's commands, and my life would be utterly wretched and unhappy. I said this earnestly, striving to repress the tears that would come; and seeing that I had made some impression upon him, I begged him to go to my father, and tell him that, under the circumstances, he no longer desired to fulfil the contract, but would release me entirely; and finished by saying:

"Unless you will be thus generous, Monsieur, my father will urge and persecute me, and render my home unbearable; for his heart is set upon this marriage. Will you do this, Monsieur?"

"Your expectations, Mademoiselle, are rather extravagant. I am disposed to be generous; but I cannot, at so short a notice, sacrifice the hopes that I have so ardently cherished, and for so long a time, for a mere caprice; for that, I am sure, is the feeling which animates you. This has come upon you so suddenly, and you are so young, it startles you. Mademoiselle, I can wait;" and, with a low bow, he left the room.

At once I was indignant—to be so calmly told by this man that my misery, that the determination which I had found it so hard to express, was but a mere caprice. "Ah! Monsieur," I whispered, "you shall find that a caprice can become a resolve."

That evening we were all assembled around the centre-table in our pleasant little parlor, playing dominos, which was a favorite game with us. My eldest brother, François, was at home, and all were merry and gay; but for me, I could not laugh; my father's manner, was so stern and forbidding; that I felt chilled and frozen. M. Eugène noticed me only so far as the requirements of politeness demanded, but on leaving, took occasion to thrust into my hand a little billet-doux, which I read as soon as I was alone.

"**MADemoisELLE LAURE:**—I see you are very unhappy—you dislike me: why should you suffer so, when such a devoted love as mine waits but for your acceptance? Ah, I am the unhappy one! I will still hope; but I will forbear attentions that are so distasteful to you.

"**EUGÈNE PINAUD.**"

Here, at least, was a respite for me; he would not come so frequently, which was one advantage gained, and my heart leaped up as though some portion of its burden had fallen away.

My father became more harsh, more unkind than before; and I was so harassed and annoyed by his cross, disagreeable manner, that my daily life was made miserable. I thought often of my dear friend, Madame de Simencourd, and longed to fly to her; for well I knew that she would find some means to relieve me of my sorrow. Sometimes, after vainly trying to beguile my father into some little show of kindness, I would almost resolve to go to him, and tell him that I would comply with his wishes; but a feeling of utter repugnance to M. Eugène would shiver through my veins, and make me falter each time that I entertained the thought. Oh, what unseen power kept me back! Why, oh, why, could I not have loved him? Fate has been very cruel to me; years of misery have been my portion since then, and I have dwelt among the shadows, remembering the light of the sun only as the glory seen in a long-vanished dream. Could I but have foreseen—but vain, vain are all my regrets! I cannot bring back my youth, and turning aside from the weary path my feet have trod, take another pathway, leading over the hills into the happy lands of the future. I must go on, although the way that lies before me leads me still through the shadows: somewhere, I know, the sunlight falls.

## CHAPTER V.

### A VISIT TO AN OLD FRIEND OF THE FAMILY.

**A**T this time I received a note from an old friend of the family, Madame Marianne B., inviting me to make her a visit. She was a very kind and hospitable lady, who entertained a great deal in the most delightful manner. She had also invited several other young people; and I was transported with joy at the prospect of this change from my home, which had ceased to be a pleasant one. Accordingly, I went

a few days earlier than the rest of the company, to assist her in some slight preparations which she desired to make for the reception of her guests. The house was large and roomy, with wide corridors. The vestibule ran the whole length of the house, and was used for our evening dances. A large and beautiful garden, which at this time was one wilderness of fragrant blossoms, was at the back of the house, and beyond a luxuriant orchard, whose trees cast huge shadows over the soft grass beneath them, making cool, pleasant recesses for us to gather in, and hold easy little chats. I had a long, confidential talk with Madame B., and related to her the full history of my troubles, and reiterated my determination never to marry M. Eugène. At first, Madame was disposed to coincide with my father, thinking only of the many advantages which would arise from the marriage; but when she saw the unconquerable repugnance which I manifested, she was convinced that it would not be wise—that I would be indeed miserable if I were forced into it. My father had an aunt, with whom he was not on very friendly terms, but I had often thought of her, remembering that she had been kind to me when I had last seen her; and this remembrance aided me in forming a resolve, which I scarcely comprehended, and did not fully acknowledge even to myself. I did not know her address, but I obtained it from Madame B., without, however, informing her of my motive. It was "Madame Turpin, *Rue Dauphine*, No. 13, Paris." I did not confide my resolve to any one, but kept it carefully concealed, and abandoned myself to the enjoyment of those pleasant days. The autumn was unusually glorious. A soft, warm haze lingered in the atmosphere, and golden and purple lights streamed through the gray mist that rose from the leafy beds of summer's decaying vegetation. One fine day we organized an expedition to the woods, carrying our lunch with us, and enjoying, like a band of thoughtless children, the full pleasure of the day. I can never forget the happiness of that day. The air resounded with our laughter and cheerful songs, and the old woods echoed with the sweetest music that

they ever knew, for it was the melody of youth and hope. Two of our party, M. Ferdinand Blanchard, and his sister, Mademoiselle Eugénie, possessed really splendid voices, and obligingly sang for us several beautiful songs. I do not know whether it was the happy associations of the day—the charming accompaniments of waving trees, mellow sunlight, young, glad faces, and merry hearts—or whether memory has given an added harmony to every note, but surely I have never since listened to such music and such singing.

Mademoiselle d'Autruit, a graceful, lovely brunette, with glorious, dark eyes which were fast ensnaring my brother François with their wonderful witchery; Mademoiselle Marie Branard, a merry little sprite, whose coaxing, winning ways were all the more enchanting because of their very childishness; Monsieur Bessel, who was the willing captive of Mademoiselle Marie; and last, but not least, for it was with difficulty that I could reach my hand to his head, even when standing on tiptoe, was my brother François, who completed our little party. Witty and mirthful speeches, sparkling jests and quick repartee were bandied from one to the other—delicious gossip was indulged in after dinner while the gentlemen smoked their cigars, and afterward the merry game of *Le maître d'école* (the school-teacher) went bravely on.

That evening, upon our return to the house, I found a letter awaiting me from M. Eugène, which I read with mingled feelings of aversion and anxiety—aversion for the writer, and anxiety for my dear mother:

"MA CHÈRE LAURE:—I spent last evening at your father's house. Your mother is not well, and longs for your return. The house is desolate and dull without you, and I feel as if it had lost its sweetest charm whenever I go there; but you do not care for us, for me: you can be happy with others. Shall I have to resign you at last? EUGÈNE P."

I was indifferent to any thing but the fact of my mother's illness, and hastily made preparations to return home that night. St. Jean de Blanc was but a short distance from

Blois, the place in which Madame B. resided, and was only an hour's ride by railway. The train started at nine o'clock, so that I had but a short time in which to make my adieux. The depot was but a short way from the house, and the whole of our party accompanied me to the cars. I expected to return alone, for although my brother François was with me, he could not return to St. Jean de Blanc. He was on his way to Paris, and had made the little detour to Blois, but could delay no longer on his way. While we were waiting in the depot for the train, to my great surprise I saw M. Eugène hastily advancing toward us. I received him coldly, and after introducing him to those of our party with whom he was not already acquainted, I announced to my friends that I had changed my mind; that I had decided not to return home that night—I would remain a day longer. Eugène drew me aside, and asked me the reason of this sudden resolve. I remained silent, regretting that the importunity of M. Eugène forced me to treat him with seeming rudeness, for I knew that he was deserving of more consideration than I accorded him. Noticing my hesitation, he hastened to say:

"Do not speak, Laure; I can guess, I well know your reason for not returning to-night. Go back with your friends and be happy again. Do not be uneasy about your mother, she is much better."

And bowing low, he hurriedly left the depot. (I thought that he remained in Blois that night, but was not certain.) We returned to Madame B.'s. She expressed her joy at my unexpected re-appearance, and supposed that we had been too late for the train. With some embarrassment, I explained to her the state of the case, and said: "Now, dear madam, I may have one more happy, lovely day with you, and then I must really leave you."

All gathered around me, saying that now I had heard from my mother, she was not ill, and did not require my immediate presence, and coaxingly urged me to remain longer; while Marie, with her thoughts turning toward continued flirtations with M. Bessel, pouted, and said: "I would break up the

party;" but I was decided, and persisted in my resolution. The next day, being the last of my charming visit, we endeavored to make the gayest. We went into the garden, and while the rest made sad havoc among the flowers, weaving beautiful wreaths that exhaled the most delicious fragrance, and making bouquets of the rarest and choicest blossoms, I amused myself by drawing caricatures with my pencil, of the passers-by.

There was a country fair, a sort of agricultural display, at a little town about two miles off; and throngs of people, mostly peasantry in their holiday attire, were wending their way thither. The costume of this class of people is extremely picturesque, and has a very pretty effect; but when caricatured it becomes ridiculous and grotesque, and my efforts in this way produced much merry laughter among ourselves. I preserved the papers, that I might amuse my mother with them, as a visible record of our amusement. When we had wearied of all the flowers and sweets the garden afforded, we went into the woods, where I became possessed of a real treasure—a little bird's nest, with four soft, downy partridges in it, which I also carried home. That evening I bade adieu to my charming companions, and to those joyous, delightful days. That pleasant visit, so full of delight and joy, is one of the brightest memories of the past—a green oasis in the desert of remembrance over which the halo of enchantment still lingers, even as the sunlight lovingly falls upon some fair meadow, bright with flowers, and melodious with the songs of the merry birds.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE RETURN HOME.

IT was near the hour of our evening meal when I reached home. I found M. Eugène sitting with my mother, who tenderly and fervently embraced me, and seemed so happy at

my return that my heart smote me for my selfishness in staying away from her so long, and I begged her to forgive me. She said that it was the greatest joy which she possessed to see her children happy, and she knew that I did not love her less because I had enjoyed my visit. Oh, what can equal the pure, unselfish love of a mother! It is a spring whose waters never fail, a blossom whose freshness and fragrance never fade, a star whose lustre never grows dim. I placed the little birds which I had brought in my mother's hand, and also gave her the papers upon which I had drawn the caricatures, and soon they were laughing merrily over the grotesque figures which I had exaggerated so ridiculously—the queer and fanciful costumes of the peasants, the gay petticoat, the buckles on the half-high shoes, the tall, conical head-dress, the immense wide ruffles around the point of the boddice, the long, heavy plaits of hair tied with bright-colored ribbons that streamed gayly back on the breeze, all made up together, which I had exaggerated in the most laughable manner. Some of the figures were on foot, and some on horseback, and both sexes were represented, together with little children, ludicrously magnified. While they were laughing at the quaint designs, I took a little basket and went out to gather some fruit for supper. I had almost filled the basket, and was about to return to the house, when M. Eugène came to seek me. He asked me to take a walk with him toward the woods, which was a favorite resort of mine, as he well knew. I was vexed, but did not dare do otherwise than comply. I waited for him to speak, and each moment that he remained silent but strengthened the spirit of contradiction rapidly rising in my breast.

"Mademoiselle," he began, "you are angry with me. What would you have? Would you have me abandon all hope at once? I love you, and I am unhappy because you neither return nor appreciate my devotion. I know you are young and thoughtless, and care nothing for the misery you are causing me."

"Monsieur," I replied, "you regard me as a child; and

you think that I am to be won, like a child, with kind words and pretty toys; but I would be doing you an injustice to pretend for you an affection which I do not possess; your persistence is cruel to me—you promised to trouble me no longer, and you have not regarded that promise. Monsieur, you are the cause of my father's harshness to me. I have discouraged you from the time that I discovered your intentions; and if you continue to persecute me, I will leave my father's house. Monsieur, I will not become your wife."

All this I said rapidly, and without giving myself time to deliberate; for I knew that if I hesitated, I should fail entirely in my utterance. A long silence followed my words—so long, that it seemed to grow dense and terrible, and I longed, yet feared to break it. At last M. Eugène said:

"Mademoiselle, I give you your liberty. I will intrude myself and my unhappy love upon you no more."

Another silence followed, as deep and long as the first, broken then by M. Eugène, who said, in a well-assumed, careless manner, as if our conversation had been of the most pleasing character:

"Mademoiselle, allow me to taste some of those delicious berries; they look very tempting;" and, thus conversing, we re-entered the house. Soon after the supper-bell rang; but as soon as we had gathered around the table, I knew, from the menacing glances which my father bent upon me, that he was already informed of what had occurred; and were it not for the merry chat and witty sallies of Elise, the meal would have been gloomy and insupportable.

In the evening, my father called me to him. I nerved myself for the interview; for I knew that it would be a decisive one. He began by asking me if I was ready to behave sensibly, and comply with his wishes. I told him that I could not love M. Eugène—that I actually disliked him—that death itself would be preferable to a marriage with him. "Oh, my father," I cried, "do not, I entreat you, be so cruel to me as to force me into this marriage; besides, M. Eugène himself has released me."



My father was furious, and with violent gesticulations threw me roughly from him saying:

"Go, ungrateful girl; you are determined to have your own way; very well, I will no longer oppose you, do as you please; but, mark my words well, Laure, you will regret it to the last hour of your life." I cared very little for the words then, the sense was too delightful, for the fact that I was free from all importunities on behalf of M. Eugène, made perfect happiness for me; but I have recalled them many, many times since. If I had been influenced by the superior wisdom of my father, it might be that my life would have been much happier. I was so young, my ideas, of course, were unformed, and my prejudices unfounded, and as M. Eugène was my first visitor, I might have learned to love him; and until he first addressed me, and I was told that (whether I would or not,) I must regard him as my destined husband, I did love him truly and innocently; but the compulsion exercised toward me changed at once my regard into indifference, and then my indifference into dislike. M. Eugène was a true gentleman, generous and warm-hearted, and it was impossible for any one to really dislike him. Oh, those little words, "it might have been," what volumes of regret they contain, with what despair have they been uttered; what bitter tears have fallen over them, sad and bitter as the tears shed above the cold, unanswering faces of the dead!

M. Eugène P. is still living. Doubtless he will read this record of my life, and, in pity for the sorrows I have endured, will forgive me all my petulances and rudenesses, and will readily yield me his kind sympathy for the accumulated griefs and woes of my sad life.

In 1848, a financial crisis occurred, which swept over the entire country, enveloping it in distress. Many commercial houses of long standing suspended their payments; well-established firms realized the insecurity of wealth, and rich banking institutions became involved in the general ruin. M. de St. Paul, an old banker to whom my father had intrusted all his fortune, suffered with the rest, and was obliged to close

his banking-house. My father, by this disastrous failure, lost everything; even the products of the last year's crops and vintage were swept away, and there remained to him only his land, which was of little use, when he no longer possessed the means wherewith to till it. This great misfortune gave birth to others, which, however, were of a different nature. (I will mention in passing that after a short time my father obtained assistance which was sufficient to enable him to cultivate his land. I never knew positively from whom this assistance was derived; but from subsequent events I inferred that M. Eugène was the generous friend to whom this good fortune was due.)

At this time I received a letter from my aunt, Madame Turpin, whom I have before mentioned. In thinking of her, I had half formed a resolve to seek her protection, should M. Eugène persist in his attentions to me; but since my father had withdrawn his commands and no longer persecuted me, I had ceased to think of leaving my home.

Madame wrote me the following little note:

"MA PETITE LAURE:—I am alone; will you not have pity for me, and come and stay a few weeks with the old woman? You shall continue to practise your music, and what other lessons you may desire. If we like each other, perhaps your father will permit you to remain a long time with me. I think he will not refuse me, although we have been foolishly estranged from each other for so many years.

"YOUR AUNT."

I was in the vineyard when this letter was brought to me. It was in the beginning of winter, and the ground was brown and bare; the lovely green vine-leaves, and the rich clusters of grapes that had made the air heavy with their luscious odors, had long since disappeared; but still it was the greatest pleasure to me to walk between the rows of poles now supporting the bare, gnarled branches of the vines, and dream of the vanished glory of that luxurious season; for it was then that I had made my visit to Madame B., and the memories of that



merry time were so delightful that I loved to live it over again in thought. But to return to my letter. After reading it, I ran quickly with it to my mother, full of wild expectancy and uncertain hope; for I did not know whether or not my parents would accede to my aunt's request. My mother never denied me anything that it was possible for her to grant, but she added to her own willing assent, "But of course it must be as your father decides, my darling."

I will pass over the long consultation, the prosy reasons advanced for and against my going, which at last resolved themselves into a decision in favor of the visit, and my father graciously told me that I might go. I was frantic with excitement and joy. I was going to Paris—beautiful Paris—that wonderful city, which I had never seen, although we lived within thirty miles of it. But I had heard so much of it. No one ever spoke of Paris but in glowing, enthusiastic terms of rapture; my schoolmates pointed at it as a paradise. M. Eugène had spoken often of the wonders to be found there; my parents, every one, in short, had contributed to raise my expectation to mountain heights. No wonder, then, that I was wild with delight at my anticipated visit. M. Eugène endeavored to dissuade me from going; but I paid no attention to the advice which he proffered me, and thought only of the new life before me. I will pass over the days that intervened before my departure. When bidding me adieu, M. Eugène said to me: "Mademoiselle, you will not come back to us the same that you leave us. You are so gay and lively, that you will too easily be attracted and influenced by the many who will surround you; your fancy is as capricious as the young May wind that sports among the flowers, never resting to gather the perfume from one, and concentrate it in a powerful fragrance; but stealing a portion of the odors of all, and wafting them before it."

I wept when I bade adieu to my father and my dear mother. M. Bessel and his sister, Mademoiselle Orelie, accompanied me to the depot; and as we were obliged to wait for a little while before the departure of the train, M.

Bessel took occasion to amuse himself, and embarrass me by whispering many gallant and tender speeches, which I have long since forgotten.

The journey to Paris was a short one, and only occupied *two hours*; but it was late when I arrived there. My aunt, accompanied by a servant, was waiting in a cabriolet, and received me with a great deal of affection; she was astonished at my growth, as she had not seen me since I was a child, and consequently had thought of me only as the little child whom she had so often held in her arms. She was about fifty years of age, inclined to *embonpoint*, and with a pleasant, kind face.

We sat up very late that night; for my aunt had many questions to ask me, as she very naturally wished to hear of everything that had transpired in the family during the years of estrangement between my father and herself. I was so weary, that when I retired, sleep took possession of my senses almost as soon as my head had settled itself comfortably on the pillow, the astounding thought that I was really in Paris being sufficient to keep me awake only a few moments.

My sleep was dreamless and sound; but I was aroused at an early hour by a strange, confused mingling of sounds, that made me imagine for a few moments that I had been transported in my sleep to the Tower of Babel. I sprang quickly from my bed and hurried to the window, drew aside the curtain, and peeped out.

Milk and butter carts were rattling and rumbling by, as if their drivers were intent upon jolting them to pieces, or breaking the legs of their horses; and dirty little boys, with bundles of papers under their arms, with mouths stretched from ear to ear, were vociferating (to me) indistinguishable words, that sounded through the general clatter like the shrill screams of some one in extreme agony, and combined with the rest to make the morning hideous.

I thought of my aunt, and wondered if she was wakened thus early every morning. I could not help contrasting these discordant noises with the sweet variations, so melodious and

musical, with which Nature greeted me in the early morning in the country. The soft, sweet warble of the wild birds; the lowing of the cattle; the shrill crowing of the lordly cock; the twitterings of the little chickens, as they answered to the cluckings of the mother hens; the distant bleatings of the sheep: all the homely sounds of my country-home, which yet made delightful harmony, came back to me, and seemed all the more musical, because of the horrible din to which I was listening.

It was some time before my aunt arose; and when I told her that I had arisen some hours before, and of the many strange noises which had wakened me, she laughed, and assured me that they never disturbed her, because she was accustomed to them; adding, that if she should spend one night in the country, she presumed that she would be wakened in like manner by the very sounds which I deemed so musical. I was all impatience to see something of Paris; and, as my aunt was willing to gratify my wishes, we went out on a tour of sight-seeing as soon as breakfast was over. I cannot tell of all the beautiful sights I saw that day, and the many and varied impressions they made upon my unsophisticated mind. Since then I have beheld many scenes of more splendor and magnificence, but the remembrance of them is not as vivid and distinct as the memory of the impressions of that first day in Paris, delightful Paris, enhanced as my pleasures were by astonishment and wonder.

Time flew swiftly by on magical wings; for my aunt was very kind to me, and strove to render my stay with her as pleasant as possible. I had spent several very happy weeks with her, when she was taken ill, and I was enabled to express my gratitude and devotion to her by kind, careful nursing and assiduous attentions. She was not dangerously ill, however, and the period of her confinement to her sick-room only served to increase and strengthen our attachment. She desired that I should remain always with her, and I was nothing loath; for I saw that her happiness, as well as my own, would be increased by my continued companionship. I was

about to write to my father, requesting permission to remain with her, when I received a summons from him, desiring me to return home the following Tuesday, to receive three of my young friends from the academy — Mademoiselle Henriette de Crignée, Orelie la Fleur, and Marie Lapin — who had written to say that they were coming to make me a visit of a few days' duration.

I was delighted; but when I showed my aunt the note, she sighed deeply, and said, with evident reluctance at my going, "Go, my child; I know that the old woman is no companion for you."

I hastened to assure her that I had been only too happy with her, and promised to come back to her, if my father permitted, as soon as my friends had taken their departure. I at once made preparations for my departure, and while doing so I received the following note from M. Bessel:

"MADEMOISELLE LAURE:—I am sorry to be the first to communicate sad news to you; but I hope you will bear bravely the loss you will necessarily sustain, and not ruin your beautiful eyes with weeping. M. Eugène has left us — gone, it is said, to marry a pretty *Suisse* girl; so, as you see, he is easily consoled. Your father informs me that he has written to you to come home. I hope you will not think me too presumptuous in being overjoyed at your return. If you will allow me, I will await at the depot. Respectfully,  
"L. BESSEL."

I was glad to know that I should not meet M. Eugène again, for some time, at least, and hoped that he would return cured of his foolish and hopeless passion for me; as for the "little Swiss girl," I knew that she was only a myth — a joke of M. Bessel's. I liked Monsieur Bessel very much; but still I avoided every opportunity of being alone with him or of receiving attentions from him; I therefore despatched a note to my brother François, who had been at home ever since my father's failure, desiring him to meet me at the depot on the following day, as I would leave Paris on the

four o'clock train. At parting, my aunt made me repeat the promise I had made of returning to her; and, with many tears, and many expressions of regret, we bade each other adieu. Alas! I little dreamed of the trouble awaiting me at home, or I should have had no thought for my own sorrow in leaving Paris and my aunt.

## CHAPTER VII.

### FRANÇOIS JOINS HIS REGIMENT.

I FOUND my brother awaiting me at the depot; and as he hastened toward me, I knew by the restless, excited look upon his face, that he had something important to tell me. After affectionately greeting me, he said:

"Well, my little sister, I have bad news for you; what will you say, when I tell you that I am going to join my regiment in a few days? You know I am of age now, and I have been notified to get ready for departure. M. Bessel has been conscripted, and is not able to procure a substitute; so he, also, will accompany me. What! are you really weeping? do not grieve so, little sister; a soldier's sister must be brave; and you know I have been educated for this very thing."

"Ah, I know that, dear François, but the shock is none the less severe. We have always been expecting it; but still, it seemed so far off, that I thought it might always remain in the future, and now it comes upon us at last as suddenly as a swift stroke of lightning."

I found my mother, and indeed, all the family very sad and tearful; but François rallied us so incessantly, and seemed so elated and pleased at the career chosen for him, and with the change awaiting him, that we strove to be gay and cheerful during the last days of his stay with us. Every now and then, however, I would almost sink under the gloomy

thoughts that assailed me, and which filled me with a vague and terrible presentiment of evil; for the regiment to which he belonged had been ordered to Algeria, and was only waiting to receive its full complement of men before leaving.

The day but one before my brother's departure, my visitors arrived; and with the desire of rendering his last day at home a pleasant one, we devoted it to enjoyment. I should have preferred to have spent it in the solitude of my own room, or in assisting the others in their loving preparations for his comfort; but the claims of hospitality were pressing upon me, and I was obliged to devise some means of entertaining my young friends. I therefore proposed an expedition to Orleans to visit the Cathedral of Tours de St. Croix, which is situated near the Loire in that place; and all being delighted with the proposition, we started quite early in the morning. This cathedral is one of the largest of which France can boast. It is several hundred years old, and yet it is not finished, for there is always some work to be done upon it. The vast structure is constantly visited by tourists, who are drawn thither by the interest inspired, not only by its venerable associations and other points of attraction, but because it is regarded as a famous and beautiful work of architecture. A massive stone tower stands at one corner, from which a magnificent view of the surrounding country can be obtained; and the low, level lands and gentle hills blend in one harmonious landscape, while the flowing streams look like threads of shining silver thrown carelessly across it. A fine statue of Jean d'Arc stands in the centre of the same square occupied by the venerable pile; and while gazing upon it, and commenting upon the great heroism of that wonderful woman, Mariè discovered a strong likeness between her face and my own. I told her that the same thing had been remarked before; and the attention of the rest of our party being called to it, they all perceived the resemblance. Henriette said jestingly:

"Laure does not resemble Jean d'Arc in character, if she does in feature, for she has too timid a nature to enact the rôle of a heroine."

I answered, with a careless shrug of the shoulders:

"We do not know of what we are capable, Henriette. One may not possess sufficient nerve to fight battles for one's country, but one may be endowed with the heroism of endurance."

We spent a couple of hours very pleasantly, and as some little time remained before it was necessary to start for home, Henriette proposed that we should visit the fortune-teller, Madame Bonbon, who lived in Orleans, and who was a celebrated clairvoyant, and gifted with the power of second sight. I had frequently heard of the wonderful gift which this woman possessed, but had never dreamed of consulting her, for I had an unacknowledged terror of the fearful power of divination of the future. Every one but myself, however, eagerly assented to Henriette's proposal, and consequently I was obliged to drift with the current, and we were soon hastening toward the house. We were ushered into a plainly furnished room, when we were met by a tall, sallow-looking gentleman, who politely invited us to be seated. We made known our errand, and he instantly drew aside a curtain, and wheeled from behind it into the middle of the floor a large arm-chair. He then left the room, but immediately returned, leading in a large woman of majestic presence, with a mild, benevolent face, whom he presented to us as Madame Bonbon. She quietly took her seat, and the gentleman proceeded at once to place her under the magnetic influence.

I was very much interested in this strange performance; I ventured to approach nearer, on the gentleman's inviting me to do so, and saw that she was completely plunged into a deep, profound slumber. I had not the courage to be the first to test her abilities, and we had some merry dispute as to who should be the one to first learn her future fate. At last Orelie volunteered, and we were invited into an adjoining room, leaving her alone with the sleeping prophetess. After a short time she appeared, looking radiant and happy, and evidently well pleased with the prospect foretold. One after the other went in, but I still hung back, until I was the last one, and could delay no longer. I entered the room with a painful

fear taking possession of me, seated myself in the chair, and placed my hand in hers. After sitting in silence for a few moments, she began to talk rapidly and incoherently, seemingly convulsed by some inward terror. She gradually became calmer, and then told me that I would soon return to Paris, and described my home in that city, together with the personal appearance of a gentleman with whom I would soon become acquainted. She said that I would receive a note from him, and at this point she became very much agitated, and cried out vehemently: "Burn it, oh, burn it, do not read it!" then in a sad tone, she murmured: "Oh, Mademoiselle, you will read it, you will be pleased, you will love that man, but oh, he has a heart of marble!" She then told me of an accident that would shortly befall a dear relative, which would result in death, (which actually occurred a few days later, and of which I will speak in its proper place.) She held my hand fast in hers, while the tears rolled slowly down her cheeks, and she frequently exclaimed: "My poor child!" All this affected me strangely and unpleasantly, but with the careless thoughtlessness of youth, the impression soon wore off; but I have often, since then, recalled that strange and painful scene. It is not my purpose now to speak of all that Madame Bonbon said that day, but I here solemnly declare that up to this present period of my life, every one of her predictions has been verified. This statement may seem strange, but I can only aver its truth.

I will dwell no longer upon the events of this day; for it was anything but a pleasant one to me.

In the evening, after our return home, we went into the garden to look at a new orange-tree which my father had recently transplanted to the hot-house. I had wandered a little way from the rest of my young companions, when M. Bessel approached me. He had several times during the day attempted to speak with me, apart from the others; but I had each time divined his purpose and evaded him, but now I could not fly from him, and was obliged to listen as he said:

"Mademoiselle Laure, will you allow me to speak with you one moment? I am unhappy—you seem to avoid me. I am about to leave you; but do not let me go without one little word of hope from you."

I looked very grave; when, seeing me about to reply, he said, hastily, but beseechingly:

"At least allow me to write to you? I love you, Laure, I love you; do not drive me to despair, but give me one sweet promise that shall enable me to endure this cruel separation."

I would have given worlds at that moment, had I possessed them, to have prevented M. Bessel from making this proposal to me; but the cruel task of answering him was before me, and I could not falter.

I cannot imagine how any woman, possessing the least delicacy or refinement, or the merest atom of a heart, can deliberately encourage a man in offering her the full fruit of his finest feelings and purest emotions, his heart's true love and devotion, in order to enjoy the cruel triumph of rejecting him; a triumph which is but a negative one, at best.

It was a pain which gave me the most exquisite torture when I gazed into the pale, agitated face and earnest eyes of my suitor, and tried my best to soften my refusal; but my nervousness, combined with the very intensity of my feelings, (for deep feeling often produces outward calmness,) made me, I fear, appear almost indifferent and insensible to the distress I was causing.

We parted, and he bade me farewell; for he was going the next morning to join the regiment to which he had been appointed. I will pass over the sad parting with my dear François, for the memory of it is as bitter as it is fresh in my mind to-day. I never looked upon his face again. The last letter which he ever wrote, written to me long years after that sorrowful day, I have carefully preserved through all the eventful years of my life. My dear, kind-hearted brother, François! I would to heaven he were alive to-day; but alas! his generous heart beats no more, but is as still and

cold as the sod under which it rests. The last act of his life, or rather the last intention which he formed, for he did not live to fulfil it, was one of generous devotion to me.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE ACCIDENT RESULTS IN DEATH.

I AM now about to speak of the terrible accident which Madame Bonbon had foretold. François Leroy, a cousin of ours, living at Rouen, hearing of the intended departure of my brother François, came to bid him farewell, but arrived one day too late, at which he was much disappointed. He was very much attached to my brother; for they had been much together, and had attended the same school. He remained with us only one day, and then started for home. It was in the winter, and the ground was frozen and slippery; he walked to the depot, and on his way thither he fell down, striking his head against a sharp rock, and thereby receiving injuries, which, in a few days, proved fatal. They brought him back to us. Oh, how sad it was! Only a few hours before, he had left us, full of life and vigor, and now, helpless and insensible, he lay with the gray shadows of death slowly gathering over his handsome face. We immediately despatched to his parents, who came at once; and all that medical skill and kind nursing could do was done for him, but of no avail. Brain fever supervened, and in a few days he was no more.

The grief of his parents was extreme, and their heart-rending anguish was painful to witness. He was a fine-looking, intelligent youth, and an only son.

I had received several letters from my aunt, Madame Turpin, begging and imploring me to come to her, and stating that she was suffering extremely with ill-health. O more

my father gave his consent to my leaving him, and I commenced my preparations, my mother and Elise assisting me. My dear Elise! how unselfish she was, and how devoted to me! She never seemed to envy me, or to wish to accompany me in my visits to Paris, of which I gave her such glowing descriptions, although it was but natural for a girl of her age to wish to partake of such enjoyments.

She possessed great taste, and was very ingenious in making pretty little articles of dress for me, and it was her delight to manufacture something that was especially becoming to me.

The day came, on which I was to leave home again, and I was about to start in a few minutes, when my father came in and announced M. Eugène, who had just returned from Suisse. I begged Elise to hurry her preparations, for I wished to leave without seeing him; but he met me in the hall, and I was obliged to exchange the little salutations of politeness with him.

"Mademoiselle, your father tells me you are again going to Paris. Will you permit me to accompany you to the cars?"

"No, I thank you, Monsieur. It is not necessary. My father will accompany me;" and as it was growing late, I hurriedly bade them all adieu, and hastened to the train.

I had apprised my aunt of the hour when I would probably arrive in Paris, and had no doubt of her being at the depot to meet me; but I was surprised to find instead an old female servant, who told me, in answer to my eager inquiries, that my aunt was very ill. On entering the house, I hurried to her bedside, and was shocked beyond measure to see the change a few weeks had wrought in her appearance. Her face was thin and shrunken, and her eyes had that peculiar wistful, earnest gaze which we see so often in the eyes of those who are about to enter into the valley of the shadow of death, as if they were striving to penetrate the gathering mists, and gain surer knowledge of the "light beyond!"

Her face brightened as I approached, and she feebly held out her hand, expressing in a faint voice her joy at my return.

I was much distressed, for she could scarcely speak. I never left her side from that hour, but waited upon her day and night; but, at the expiration of a week her spirit sought heaven, fleeing calmly and tranquilly from the tenement of clay wherein it had dwelt so long.

We buried her beneath the cold, brown earth, and I felt desolate indeed, as I put the empty house in order, missing all the while the kind presence of her who had been the presiding spirit in its now barren chambers—barren of life and joy. Ah, I was already growing familiar with the presence of death. He had come so near to me, that I could never again regard the dread visitor as a stranger, but must always extend to him the recognition of tears and mournful memories.

After packing away all the effects of my aunt, I was about to return home, when Madame Boursin, an intimate friend of my aunt, who had been much with her during her last illness, insisted upon my accompanying her home, to remain some time with her. I accepted her kind invitation, and wrote to my father at once, telling him of the change in my plans, and asking his approval. He readily gave his consent, for Madame Boursin was an old friend of his also; but he enjoined upon me a quiet seclusion from all gayeties. This advice was needless, for Madame Boursin was a devoted *religieuse*, and no one ever mentioned balls and parties before her, for she regarded them as evils and abominations.

Her daughter, Mademoiselle Rosine, and myself accompanied her every morning to church, St. Suplice; and one morning I thought I saw, sitting opposite me in the church, my dear Madame de Simencourt; I was nearly transported with joy, but Madame Boursin assured me that I was mistaken, for she knew that Madame de Simencourt was travelling abroad. She was correct, for by a singular coincidence, the lady herself mistook me for an acquaintance, and accosted me at the conclusion of the service, and laughed merrily when I told her of my own doubt, and my subsequent disappointment.

The house which we occupied stood opposite the Hotel de France; it was a very large building, one side of which formed

the residence of Madame Boursin, while the other side was divided into *suites* of apartments, or single rooms and offices, which were rented to lodgers, who took their meals at the Hotel. The windows of my room looked out upon a large court-yard, and opposite were those of an office occupied by a gentleman, who was, as I afterward learned, a medical student.

I frequently saw him at his window, and always with his book in his hand, and his *personnel* soon became familiar to me. He was of medium height, and extremely handsome, with fair complexion, long black hair, and beautiful blue eyes. I used to sit at my window with my embroidery, (which I found to be a dangerously fascinating mode of passing the time,) and would often cast sly glances toward my *beau voisin*. I was sitting thus one day with Rosine, gayly laughing and chatting, when he approached the window of his room, and threw us a smile; we immediately withdrew, and Rosine at once informed her mother, who was very angry at the presumption of the young American, and bade us never sit near the window again, or to raise the curtain. We promised to obey, and let the curtain down; but although he could not see us, we could see him, by lifting a corner of it, and peeping out. In this way we amused ourselves, laughing at his evident disappointment when he would come to his window and find ours closed: although I must confess that I was sorry for him, and sympathized with him; he was so handsome, so manly, that I was becoming very much interested in him. Sometimes I met him, in passing up and down the grand stairway; when he would always smile, and say pleasantly, "*Bon jour*," or "*Bon soir*, Mademoiselle."

He was an American, but spoke the French language tolerably well; for I frequently overheard him speaking to a neighbor, or a servant, in the court.

Madame Boursin was very strict (although she was as kind to me as a mother could be,) and seldom allowed Rosine and myself to go out, even for a little promenade, unless she accompanied us; and as she cared for little else beside her

church, our outside pleasures were but few. Although it is the custom in France to debar young girls from exercising any privilege unless under the strict surveillance of a *duenna*, I was very impatient under such restraint, accustomed as I had been to a free and untrammelled life in the country; but at the same time, I did not rebel, nor inveigh against this time-honored custom. On the contrary, with all national prejudices in favor of *la belle* France, then, as now, her law was my religion. I confess to thinking very often of my handsome neighbor, and was always delighted when I chanced to receive a brilliant smile or a pleasant word from him. At last, one happy day, I received a billet doux from him, which made me tremble with joy as I read it:

"PARIS, April 4, 18—.

"MADEMOISELLE:—Will you allow me to express my respectful admiration of your modest deportment and charming person? Your beautiful eyes have enslaved me forever; and I would esteem myself happy beyond measure if you would accord me the privilege of forming your acquaintance.

"With sincere respect,

"J. B. HILTON."

I was like a poor little moth, fluttering and scorching its pretty light wings in the brilliant flame of the lamp. Alas, I did not know that the beautiful light, about which I fluttered so wildly, would burn away my very life, even as the lamp burns the silly moth.

The note was not addressed, owing to the ignorance of the writer concerning my name; but, with the intuition of a heart just awaking to the beauty of "love's young dream," I knew it was intended for me.

I remembered my father's advice, never to do anything without first consulting Madame Boursin; so I immediately ran to her with my precious note. She advised me to take no notice of it, and said:

"This man is very impertinent. It is the height of presumption for him to write to you when he does not even know



your name. Pray, how do you know that it is intended for you?"

I felt my face flush crimson, but did not answer. My consciousness was growing painful, so I turned away, and sought my own room, there to read and re-read the few words which the seemingly unimportant note contained, and to write a thousand imaginary answers.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE LONG-WISHED-FOR INTERVIEWS.

ON the second floor of the house in which we resided lived Monsieur and Madame Santaire. They had a lovely daughter, Mademoiselle Desirée, who was very ill; and a few days after the reception of Dr. Hilton's note, Madame Victorine, the nurse, sent for Rosine and myself to come to the apartment where the young girl was lying. She was in the last stages of consumption, and possessed the clear, delicate beauty which is often an attendant of that dread disease. Her betrothed lover was by her bedside, and it was pitiable indeed to witness his deep anguish. He called to her in the most affectionate terms, imploring her not to leave him lonely and desolate upon the earth, murmuring all the endearing little pet-names she was so fond of hearing, and weeping with such passionate despair that every eye gave its tribute of tears in sympathy with his distress.

It soon became known throughout the house that Desirée was dying, and many sympathizing friends came in, among whom was Dr. Hilton. I felt my heart leap up with an exultant throb, for which I instantly reproached myself, and wondered how I could entertain one feeling of gladness in the presence of so much sorrow. The dying girl lay with her beautiful, large eyes fastened upon her lover's face with a

wistful, yearning look, which affected me so strangely that I could endure it no longer, and, making a sign to Rosine, we quietly left the room. Dr. Hilton followed us; and, conversing sadly, we went slowly on until we reached our own door; where, bowing politely, he left us; throwing back at me, however, a tender, reproachful look, as if to ask me why I had not answered his note.

I was very sad while the recollection of that solemn death-bed scene was present to my mind; but under the influence of this new and wonderful emotion which possessed my heart, I soon revived, and regained my wonted vivacity and cheerfulness. The weather was as lovely and beautiful as only spring weather can be; every breeze that flew by on odorous wings, wafted before it the perfume of violets and sweet lilies of the valley, the purest blossoms that crown the brow of the young year; and in my heart, as well as in nature's citadel, everything was, indeed, *couleur de rose*. I sat often at my dear little window; for there was no other seat in the room that pleased me as well; indeed, I felt that I could have sat there forever; for was not my *beau voisin* opposite? We soon learned to converse by signs; and the thrilling emotion of pleasure and rapturous delight was never more keenly felt than in the answering echoes of my own heart, when he thus mutely declared his passion — more exquisite even in its perfect joy than when I heard the sweet tale of love from his own lips. He sent me beautiful bouquets each day, and I imagined that a smile or a word trembled over every flower; and sometimes a box of delicious *bon-bons* would reach me by the servant. These latter I always shared with Rosine, who used often to tease me, and would say, when she saw my friend passing:

"Oh, Laure; run here quickly. Here is your savage American, with his huge *fourgon* of a pipe."

One day I ventured to send him, by the same servant who had brought to me some trifling gift, a few pretty little *pastilles*; but afterward I repented bitterly, for I felt ashamed of my boldness, and feared that he would think me forward.



Rosine, however, said there was no harm in what I had done; but she told her mother everything that had passed. Madame was very angry, and obliged us to remove into another room on the other side of the house. I was very unhappy at this change, and so was Rosine, who regretted that she had not been more reticent in her communications to her mother.

I now saw *mon ami* but seldom; indeed, it was only when I would go down into the court for a drink of fresh, cool water, and would look up at his windows, that I saw him at all. We had to be content with mute glances only; for his room was so high that we did not venture to speak with each other, as it involved too much risk of being overheard. Rosine and I used to visit *la cuvette* very often, sometimes taking a pitcher with us to fill with cool water; for we were very thirsty. I rather think poor Rosine was a victim to cold water in those days. I cannot help but smile when I recall the assumed eagerness with which we drank the water which we had rather have thrown upon the ground. Oh! what giddy, thoughtless girls we were; but we possessed one treasure which all the gold of the world could not buy: we were happy and contented.

Happiness and contentment! two priceless treasures which only come to us in the beautiful days of youth, were all our own. One day, as I was passing along the corridor, I met the *garçon* with a cup of black coffee in his hands. I asked him "to whom he was carrying it." He replied that it was for Dr. Hilton, who was suffering with a headache. I expressed my regret and passed on. The *garçon* doubtless informed the Doctor of my inquiries; for that very afternoon I received the following note:

"Dr. J. B. Hilton presents his compliments to Mademoiselle Laure Lenoir, and requests that he may be allowed to attend her to the *Opera Comique* to-morrow evening. 'Pilate du Diable' will be performed, which will furnish a fine entertainment."

I was delighted beyond measure. I had never been inside of a theatre; and, of course, had never witnessed the representation of a play or an opera; they were sealed mysteries to me; and, with all the unrestrained ardor of a young heart that sees, for the first time, the possibility of pleasure before it, I longed to go; but I knew that Madame Boursin would never consent. I thought of first one plan and then another which might enable me to accomplish my desire; but they were none of them feasible, and I was obliged to reject them all; so, sadly drawing a sheet of paper toward me, I wrote the following reply:

"MONSIEUR HILTON:—I regret that I cannot accept your kind invitation; but Madame Boursin will never consent to my attending a theatre. At some other time, perhaps, I may prevail upon her to allow me to go with you.

"LAURE LENOIR."

After giving this note to a *fille de chambre*, I returned to my room, and read again the little note which gave me so much delight. But I remember well that in my childish ignorance of the rules of polite letter-writing, I became extremely angry at discovering that Dr. Hilton had not signed his name to the note, and imagined that this omission implied some disrespect to me. I did not know that, as the note was written in the third person, it would have been manifestly incorrect had the name of the writer been attached. While I was still thinking about it, I received a message from Madame Boursin, desiring me to come to her room. I ran quickly along the passage, and, playfully dropping a courtesy as I entered, said: "*Madame, je vous salue le bon jour;*" but she only seated me gently beside her, and told me that the waiting-maid had just brought to her the note which I had written to Dr. Hilton, and consequently she had perused it, adding: "*Ma chere petite Laure*, I saw nothing objectionable in your note, and therefore I sent it to the gentleman for whom it was destined; but it grieved me much, my child, to know that you were concealing everything from me. Did

you not intend to come and show me the note which you have received? You are not afraid of me, are you, Laure?"

"Oh! no, no, Madame; you are so kind to me that I can never feel afraid when you show me so much affection. Here is the note;" and pulling it from the bosom of my dress, I placed it in her hand. She read it slowly, and as she did so, I saw an uneasy, troubled expression settle upon her face, and with much earnestness and solicitude in her manner, she said:

"My child, it is my duty to warn you against this man; he has a bad, a treacherous face; I know he is perfidious and cruel; he will deceive you." I was nearly frantic with anger to hear him, the flower of perfection in my eyes, my *beau idéal* of all manly beauty and intellect, thus spoken of; and when Madame continued, "Laure, I entreat you to be candid with me: do you already love this stranger?" I passionately answered, without a moment's hesitation: "I do, Madame, indeed I do!" Anger drew from me the fact that I had only coyly acknowledged to myself, and which all the coaxings and pleadings in the world would not have induced me to utter. Madame clasped both my hands in hers, and said, with the utmost sorrow and distress in her voice: "Oh, Laure, Laure, you do not know this man. Is it possible that you can love him; that you can calmly think of abandoning your parents, your home, your country, to go with this stranger?"

I was too angry to heed anything but the fact that my handsome lover (as I had named him in the secret recesses of my heart) was assailed; the vehement manner and harsh words of Madame obliterating her sincerity of heart and kind intentions, and I hastened to answer, as I burst into a flood of indignant tears:

"Oh, Madame, I know he is a gentleman; if you will only consent to become acquainted with him, I know you will entertain a different opinion of him; he is truthful and ingenuous, I feel it in my heart; and his face is not treacherous, it is honorable and pleasing; and I love him, Madame."

Here I paused, overcome by the strength of my emotions, and the sudden consciousness that I had been betrayed, by my eagerness to defend my lover, into a confession which I had hitherto admitted to myself only, in the sweet, silent hours of communion with my own heart. Madame caught me impulsively in her arms and cried:

"Oh, I alone am to blame for this. I was blind, blind; tell me, Laure, how far has this affair gone, how many times has Dr. Hilton written to you?"

I assured her that I had received but the two notes which she had seen; she was evidently relieved, and said:

"*Ma chère*, this man is only amusing himself with you, you are such a little child; see, you have not yet taken off your short dresses; really, it is amusing. He finds entertainment, doubtless, in ridiculing you to his friends."

My face flushed, and I answered indignantly:

"Oh, Madame, he cannot be so perfidious; you are unjust, uncharitable."

"Well, my child, we will talk no more at present; you may go now, I will attend to this; but do not hesitate to confide in me; I am your best friend, and you must trust my affection for you."

I embraced her, and returned to my room, with my heart almost bursting with the doubts and conjectures newly born therein.

Rosine was waiting for me, for she desired that I should accompany her to see Madame Santaire, who was quite ill.

Glad to get away from the companionship of my own thoughts for a short time, I consented, and we proceeded to the apartments of our sick neighbor. Madame Santaire had been gradually drooping since the death of her daughter, and it seemed as though she was dying of grief. She sat often by the open window, in a large arm-chair, which her devoted husband would place for her, hoping that the sight of the busy out-door life, passing before her, would beguile her attention, and amuse her. I used to go and sit with her occasionally, for my heart was full of sympathy for her. It was pain-

ful to witness her evident restraint over the expression of her grief, and the heart-broken smile with which she would reply to her husband's solicitous and affectionate inquiries, or to the efforts of some friend who would try to entertain her with some little anecdote or light conversation.

We were sitting in the room, telling Madame Santaire all the little *on dits* that we could recollect, when Dr. Hilton passed, looked in, saw us, and entered. It was the first time he ever shook hands with me. I sat in silent joy at his near presence for a short time, conversing but little. I was so easily embarrassed, that I could scarcely reply to the few remarks which he addressed me. In a few moments I returned to my room. That same evening, when chatting at the window with Rosine, I saw him sitting in his usual place, with his feet upon the window-sill. I noticed that he wore a pair of beautifully embroidered slippers, and I experienced a feeling of jealousy at once, as I wondered what lady had presented them to him.

The next day I received a long letter from my father, who spoke of my coming home, but did not insist upon it. It had now become a constant fear with me, that Madame Boursin would write to my father and inform him of my new acquaintance; in that case, I knew that I should be obliged to return instantly, and thus be separated from my handsome neighbor—a consequence which I could not calmly contemplate. The same day I received a note from Dr. Hilton, requesting permission to call upon me; and fearing that Madame Boursin would not allow me to receive him, I replied that I would meet him at Madame Victorine's. I knew that I was doing wrong, but my fear of Madame Boursin writing to my father made me hesitate about telling her the contents of the note which I had received; neither did I tell Rosine, although I had heretofore confided in her unreservedly. Thus another step was taken along the path which fate seemed to have marked out for me.

I was very anxious to look as well as possible at this interview, so I proceeded to array myself in one of my most becoming dresses; a delicate rose-colored muslin, that contrasted

well with my dark eyes and hair, and by its effect heightened the brilliancy of my complexion.

When my toilette was complete, I crossed the court, and knocked at Madame Victorine's door. My heart fluttered so strangely, that I was forced to lean against the frame-work for a few moments, in order to compose myself. The door opened, and Dr. Hilton himself came forward and led me to a seat. He observed my agitation, and quietly conversed with Madame Victorine until I recovered my self-possession.

After a little time, Madame Victorine left us, and he at once took a seat by my side, and expressed his pleasure at seeing me. His manner was so kind and gentle, and his handsome face beamed with an expression of such frankness and sincerity, that I wondered how it was possible for Madame Boursin to entertain a single prejudice against him; and with a fervent hope, inwardly expressed, that she would soon regard him with more favor, I gave myself up to the fascination of that delightful hour. Every word that he said to me is indelibly impressed upon my heart, although what I answered I have long since forgotten. When he left, he reminded me of the promise I had made, to go with him to the theatre, and proposed doing so that very evening. I assented, provided I could obtain Madame Boursin's permission; and then, respectfully kissing my hand, he bade me adieu. Oh, my happiness, my happiness! how like a visible picture of radiance and beauty it lay spread out before me, with no cloud over its bright surface. I loved, I was loved in return; and clothed in the sparkling armor in which Love clothes his devotees, I did not fear the shafts that might be directed against me. I hastened to my room, and throwing myself on the bed, abandoned myself to the luxury of living over again in imagination every moment of that delightful interview.

It was some time before I could summon courage to ask the permission of Madame Boursin to go to the theatre, and my disappointment was extreme upon meeting with a refusal, although I had not dared to hope for a consent. I was very angry, and deemed her unnecessarily strict; I was nearly

frantic to go, and it was cruel, it was wicked of her to refuse. Here I was in lovely Paris, the city of amusement, where pleasure reigned supreme, and debarred from partaking of any of its delights. Thus I reasoned; and, giving myself up to the full influence of uncontrolled grief, I conducted myself like a spoiled child, and remained absent from the tea-table, although Madame sent for me several times. She came to my room immediately after the evening meal was over, and found me weeping. I had already sent a note to Dr. Hilton, telling him that I was again obliged to decline his invitation, and begging him not to be angry with me.

"Why, Laure," said Madame Boursin, "are you weeping because I refused to let you go to the theatre? I did so because I thought it my duty, for you are too young to go to such places."

"If the theatre is such a wicked place, Madame, why do so many persons who are not wicked go there? You say I am too young; I am nearly fifteen years old, and I know of many children who go," I replied; then pleadingly; "Oh, please let me go, Madame! I will be so grateful; I will thank you so many times."

Placing her hand kindly upon my shoulder, she said: "My child, it is not altogether my objection to the theatre as a place of amusement that causes me to refuse; if I attended such places I would take you myself; but I do not like Dr. Hilton, and I cannot consent, consistently, to your going with him."

"Oh, Madame! if you knew Dr. Hilton, I am sure you would lose all your prejudices against him; he is so good. Oh, do not deny me this one favor, Madame! please let me go?"

She looked down upon me for a moment, and seeing how eagerly I waited for an answer, she said: "I cannot withstand such earnest pleading, Laure; my heart is not as hard as you seem to think it. I will give my consent to your going for this *one* time; but I must add, that I do so reluctantly."

I gave her an impulsive embrace; and, as I had but a few

moments in which to make my toilet, I hastened to my window and signalled to my friend, who was watching for my appearance, that I could go.

In half an hour he called for me, and we were soon in our places at the theatre. It was a strange and bewildering scene to me. The dense crowd of people, all gaily dressed; the brilliant lights; the delightful music; the perfumed atmosphere, all so new to me, confused and bewildered me; and it was some time before I could reassure myself.

The elegant toilets of the ladies, who all seemed beautiful to me; the flashing of jewels; the wavings of snowy fans, from which soft particles of down detached themselves and floated through the air like fluttering snow-flakes, made a scene of brilliancy and enchantment. I experienced, too, the strange sensation which one always feels when conscious of being gazed at for the first time through the *lorgnettes*, and which, in my ignorance, I fancied were directed especially at me from all parts of the house.

I felt like one being awakened from a dream, when Dr. Hilton bent over me and whispered;

"Well, Mademoiselle Laure, what do you think of all this?"

I had not addressed a word to him since we had taken our seats, and when I turned to reply, I was filled with chagrin, at discovering how much he was amused by my evident wonder, and *naïve* words. The play was "The Marble Heart," and to my unaccustomed eyes and ears, was very affecting. I had neither thought nor sight for anything but the play during its performance, and Dr. Hilton laughingly remarked that it was a great pity that one so appreciative as I, could not gratify my tastes more often.

Ah, that was a happy evening; to sit with my handsome lover beside me, drinking pure draughts of the elixir of love which his very presence distilled, and imbibing new and strange ideas from the wonderful representation of mimic life before me.

Sweet dreams kept watch over me that night, but before I

slept I thought of poor Monsieur Eugène, and wished that he was as happy as I—that he, too, might experience the exquisite joy of being beloved.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE PROPOSAL.

THE next day Madame Boursin went to Versailles to attend to some important business; she intended being absent only one week, and left Rosine and myself, with one servant, in charge of the house, enjoining upon us to go to no places of amusement or public resort, and above all to avoid much company, during her absence.

The first day that we were thus left alone, we remained in the house, not going out at all, but the restraint was terrible.

After that day, deeming that we had exercised prudence enough, we relaxed our strict obedience to Madame's commands.

I received a visit from Dr. Hilton every evening, when we would go out for a promenade. How charming were those walks; the weather was lovely, and my own heart seemed to emit rays of happiness, while a glory and a glamour trembled in the air, beautifying every object, however humble.

The evening before the expected return of Madame Boursin, we were enjoying our usual promenade; I noticed that Dr. Hilton was very quiet and thoughtful, but seeming not to heed it, I exerted myself to be merrier than usual. He made but few and short replies to my gay sallies. At last I said: "You are very silent, Monsieur; are you ill?"

"No, Mademoiselle, on the contrary, I am very well; but I have something on my mind, and trembling on my lips, which I wish to say to you, and yet I lack the courage. Let us return to the house, for while I talk to you I want to look deep into your beautiful eyes, and hold your dear little hand

close in my own. Do you know, Mademoiselle, that you are very charming?"

In a manner of assumed gravity, I answered:

"Yes, Monsieur, I know it, for have you not told me so very frequently?"

I could not help laughing at the comical look of astonishment on his face as he said:

"Yes, Mademoiselle, I know I have often told you this, but to-night you are more charming than ever, and I do not know which most ensnares my willing heart, your lovely face and form, or your bewitching manners."

Not receiving any answer, he said:

"Why do you not answer me, Mademoiselle? I hope I have not offended you? Tell me, Laure, you are not angry with me?"

"Oh, no, Monsieur; I was only thinking that, what would be unmistakable, revolting flattery from another, seems—" I hesitated.

"Tell me what you intended saying, Mademoiselle."

I impulsively cried: "Oh, call me Laure again, and I will tell you!"

He whispered, very softly: "Go on, Laure."

I said: "I only wanted to tell you that—that—you do not mean—only—it is such a pleasure to me to know that you think me pretty, Monsieur."

He answered simply: "My dear little Laure."

We entered the house and took our seats near the open window. I felt uneasy at his constrained, silent manner, and tried to make him smile. At last he said:

"Laure, I have something to say to you; let me hold your hand in mine, and feel that you are near me, while I talk to you. You know that I am studying medicine; and that I have only two years to remain in Paris before I return to America; but you do not know, Laure, that I am very poor. I have only one hundred dollars a month, which I receive from my father, upon whom I am entirely dependent. My father himself is not wealthy; indeed, all the property he

possesses comes to him through his second wife, who is my step-mother."

"Do you like your step-mother, Monsieur?" I interrupted.

"Yes, I like her very much; for she has always been a kind, good friend to me. I have also two sisters, one of whom is married; but the other, my little Caroline, is at home; but I am the only son, and I am poor. Do you think you could love a poor man, Laure?"

I was silent a moment, for his words caused me to compare the different emotions with which I had listened to M. Eugène and to himself. I cared nothing for the one, who not only offered me the priceless boon of love, as pure and true, perhaps, as that now proffered me, but also every luxury and comfort which unlimited wealth could command; while to him now pleading to me, who possessed nothing of his own, but was dependent upon his father's bounty, my heart went out in full and free submission, and words are powerless to describe the strength of my deep, unchangeable love for him. Such strength of feeling may appear strange in one so young, but I knew, by every feeling that thrilled my heart, that I could love no other. I scarcely knew how to reply to him. I felt timid and embarrassed; but, finally, I said, hesitatingly:

"I am not mercenary, Monsieur; poverty could not influence my feelings toward any one. I should not love for the sake of wealth; but—"

Just then we were interrupted by a strolling singer, who paused before the window and sang, in a sweet, pathetic voice, the *Normandie*. How vividly this scene comes back to me whenever I hear that melody. Even when the words of the sweet song were ringing in my ears, Dr. Hilton turned to me again, and said, passionately:

"Laure, be frank with me. Do you love me? Are you willing to leave beautiful Paris and go with me to America?"

I placed both hands in his, and was about to reply, when he interrupted me.

"Wait, Laure; my father is a very stern and severe man; he may not allow me much to live upon, and I may be forced

to give up my profession; bitter poverty may be my portion; but, if you will share it with me, it will be sweet and beautiful as the passing of a happy dream through a troubled sleep."

I leaned forward, and he caught me in his arms as I answered:

"Oh, Monsieur, I can bear poverty, sorrow — anything for your sake. The happiness of being beloved by you would compensate me for any privations or troubles I might have to endure."

We then talked of our future. *Our's!* What a sense of possession in him the word gave me; and, as I sat with his arm thrown around me, and my head resting upon his shoulder, I felt that no happiness could equal mine; that earth contained no greater blessing than had that day been bestowed upon me.

When he bade me good-night, he said: "I must say *adieu*, and not good-night, to-night; for I shall not see you for two whole days. I am obliged to go to Boulogne early to-morrow morning, but I will see you again on the evening of my return."

After I retired that night, I lay long awake, thinking of the best mode of imparting my important news to my parents, and, at last, I determined to employ the two days of Dr. Hilton's absence in returning home to see my father and mother, and tell them all that had occurred. I trembled at the thought of approaching my father; for, from the tenor of his letters, I could see that he still retained the hope that I would one day accept the addresses of M. Eugène. My visit to Paris had been prolonged from time to time, at the request of Madame Boursin, to whom I had made myself useful with my needle. I was very expert in doing embroidery, which I had learned from my dear Madame de Simencourt; and, as Madame Boursin was very fond of adorning her clothing with fine work, I took great pleasure in assisting her. She was always very kind to me, and I shared with Rosine the privileges of a daughter. Madame Boursin returned the next day, and I informed her of my wish to go home, without, however, confiding to her my object. She readily gave her

consent, first requiring a promise from me that I would return, which promise I very gladly gave; for I felt that life would possess no charms for me were I obliged to spend it away from Paris. I had but few preparations to make, and when these were accomplished, I hastened to the train, and was soon with my dear mother. Oh, how delighted they all were to see me! My younger brothers, Lucien and Emile, were at home; and while I was expressing my astonishment to see how tall they had grown, they both laughed at me, and said they had expected to see me still in my short dresses.

"But," said Emile, "here you are with your long trains, and your hair arranged like a young lady."

"Yes," said Elise; "and it is a wonder, too, that Laure consents to wear long dresses, and hide her pretty feet, since she is so vain of them."

I responded: "Yes, I think so, too; for the pretty boots I get in Paris only make them all the prettier;" and I held them out that she might admire them, I was extremely vain of my feet, and enjoyed the pleasant *badinage* of which they were the subject.

Home never seemed so pleasant to me before; everything out of doors looked so cool and green, so fresh and fragrant, that my eyes seemed to drink in new delights, whichever way they turned. My brother's face beamed with gladness and joy, and Elise, always pretty, had grown really handsome during the time of my absence. It was not long before some of my friends, hearing of my return (for news spreads very quickly in the country), came in to see us, and among others, M. Eugène. He grasped my hand very cordially, and appeared delighted and pleased, but, at the same time, more dignified and reserved than I had ever known him. When I informed him that I would return to Paris the next day, if my father permitted, he became still more distant in his manner, and said:

"I thought, Mademoiselle, that you had come home to stay; but I see that Paris has wooed and won you, and you are gone from us forever. I hope you will never regret it, Made-

moiselle." So saying, he left me abruptly, and never spoke another word to me during his stay.

I now began to dread the interview with my father; and when he proposed to me to go with him through the vineyard, and look at some improvements which he had been making, my heart beat wild and fast, as I determined to avail myself of the opportunity thus presented. Over the cool, green path we walked, and the soft breeze swept over my burning face, cooling and soothing it as kind words calm an aching heart. My father began the conversation by saying:

"Well, Laure, how do you like Paris? and have you become so much attached to Madame Boursin, that you prefer remaining with her to living in your own home?"

"Oh, my dear father, Paris is an enchanting place, and it is true that I wish to return there. Madame Boursin is very kind to me, and also wishes me to come back to her. You will permit me to do so, will you not, father?"

"I have no objection, my child. Madame is an excellent woman, and very prudent and reserved in her associations with others. I hope you are dutiful and obedient, and endeavor to assist her as much as possible.

"Indeed, father, I do try."

"But I wish to speak with you now upon a different subject, Laure. M. Eugène has conversed with me many times upon his dearest wishes, which you know so well, and which are mine also."

"Oh, my father, please do not mention that subject to me again. You promised me that you would no longer urge me to marry M. Eugène. It was impossible for me to love him when he first addressed me, and now, it is still more so."

"What do you mean Laure?"

"Oh, father, I love another deeply and truly." My voice trembled as I made this answer.

"Who is he? this man you love; what is he?" cried my father fiercely.

With imploring gestures and faltering voice I answered:

"He is a young doctor in Paris—an American. Oh, father, pray do not be angry!"



"Ungrateful girl! I would rather see you in your coffin. I would rather stand beside your grave, than have you marry a stranger, and go so far away from your home."

He uttered these words with uplifted hand, while his countenance was flushed and convulsed with anger.

We walked on in silence, which I dared not break. I feared that he would now oppose my returning to Paris; and after thinking a few moments, I determined to treat the matter lightly, and say no more about it at present, for I had other obstacles to fight, which presented themselves one after the other, in quick succession, to my excited imagination. The laws of France are very stringent against the marriage of maidens of extreme youth, without the consent of their parents, so I said, with a forced laugh:

"It is only a jest, father, but please do not say anything more to me about M. Eugène."

"Very well my child, but do not attempt to jest again upon this subject. I am obliged to go to Orleans to-night, and I cannot talk with you at present; but I shall investigate this matter further on my return."

"But, father, I wish to return to Paris to-morrow — you consent, do you not?"

"Yes, Laure, if you wish;" and kissing me good-by, he entered the house to prepare for his short trip.

The evening wore away in pleasant chat. My dear mother was looking remarkably well, and she talked much more than usual; for she was always silent in my father's presence. We clustered around her, and read together the last letter which was received from our absent François, which was very interesting. He wrote in excellent spirits, and related to us many details of his mode of living, and his numerous adventures. M. Eugène came in as the evening grew late, and I retired at once. The next morning I bade adieu to all, and hastened to the cars. M. Eugène joined me, and endeavored to lead the short conversation back to old times; but I was determined not to touch upon that dreaded subject, and thwarted him by many little subterfuges. He became confused, and I was rejoiced when the whistle sounded, and I could say adieu.

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE RETURN TO PARIS.

I FOUND Madame Boursin waiting for me at the dépôt, and we walked rapidly homeward. Madame was interested in the account of my visit home, and affectionately inquired for all of the family. When we reached the house, I hastened at once to my little room, and without waiting to throw aside my wrappings, hurried to the window. It seemed to me that I had been absent an age, and that something must have occurred during my absence. My happiness was like a dream, and sometimes I feared that I should waken, and lose it. Dr. Hilton was seated in his usual place, smoking his long, ugly pipe, which he quickly threw down on seeing me, and with whole face brightening, and growing radiant with joy, he threw me a kiss, and eagerly signed to me, to know when he could see me. I replied, in the same mute language:

"At Madame Victorine's this evening."

I must not forget to mention, with gratitude, the exceeding kindness of Madame Victorine. Madame Boursin was so strongly opposed to my acquaintance with Dr. Hilton, that I should have been at a loss to know how and when I could see him, had I not possessed so good a friend as Madame Victorine proved herself.

The long hours of the day passed slowly, and were most wearisome to me. I knew not what to do with myself, and, several times, was on the point of acquainting Madame Boursin with everything that had transpired; but, by a strong effort, I refrained.

Evening came at last. I hastened to Madame Victorine's at the appointed time. Dr. Hilton was there before me; and as he silently pressed me to his heart, I mutely prayed to God that his love would equal mine then and always; for I felt



an inward conviction that my devotion for him would exist as long as life itself. We seated ourselves upon a little *tête-à-tête* sofa, and he whispered:

"*Ma petite*, have you thought of all I said to you?"

"Yes, Monsieur; and I also attempted to tell my father, and notwithstanding his severe words to me, my mind is still unchanged.

"What was it, my darling?—what did he say to you?"

I did not wish to tell him; but a second thought decided me that it was best to do so, and I related to him all that had passed. When I had finished, he exclaimed, his eyes sparkling indignantly: "Your father, my Laure, is not more severe than mine. I know my father will object to my marrying one who is not of my own country; but, *ma petite*, I am willing to give up all, everything, for you."

He then spoke of the difficulties we would have to encounter in getting the ceremony performed by a Catholic priest, as it was against the rules of the Church to unite a Protestant and a Catholic without the consent of the parents; and no Protestant clergyman would be willing to perform the ceremony, because I was so young. We decided, after a long conversation, that we would go to a magistrate, and that we would conduct the matter as privately as possible, to avoid all interference.

"And now," said Dr. Hilton, "let us make all our arrangements for the future. We cannot afford, my dear Laure, to board at the Hotel de France, or, indeed, at any other hotel. How would you like to take a *suite* of rooms, and furnish them plainly? and would you be willing to live very economically?"

With my eyes full of happy tears, I answered: "You know I shall be pleased with any arrangement you will make; and I am certain that I shall be the happiest little house-keeper in all France."

He laughed as he said: "Well, then, *ma petite*, we will go to house-keeping very soon. How soon shall it be, Laure?"

I did not answer, for I thought of all the difficulties that

lay in my path, and wondered how I could surmount them without exciting the suspicions of Madame Boursin and Rosine. Seeing my hesitation, and divining the cause, he hastened to say:

"Never mind, Laure; I must first get my cage ready for my bird. You shall go out with me to-morrow, and we will ask Madame Victorine to accompany us and assist us in selecting our furniture and other needful articles; and when the house is ready, we can have the ceremony performed in our own parlor."

Oh, with what delight I listened to him! With what exquisite pleasure my thirsty heart drank in the music of his voice! We were now obliged to separate; and, with a parting injunction to be ready the next day for our pleasant tour, he bade me good-night.

Madame Victorine readily consented to accompany us, and was of great assistance to us in making our selections for house-keeping, as she had the experience and judgment which we lacked. Indeed, she aided me very much, not only on this day, but during all the time that intervened before my marriage. She smoothed the progress of our preparations; and, as the eventful day approached, I thought that my happiness would be complete if I could only confide in Madame Boursin, and tell her all my joy. She must have been aware that I was receiving the visits of Dr. Hilton at Madame Victorine's; but she made no allusion to it, and her manner toward me was as kind as ever. My own duplicity toward her made me feel uncomfortable; and the fear that she would write to my father and summon him to Paris alone prevented my giving her my confidence.

At last, the decisive evening came; and, when all was ready, Dr. Hilton and Madame Victorine conducted me to a *cabriolet*, which was in waiting, and we drove speedily to the apartments which were henceforth to be my own. They were situated in the Rue St. Denis, eight or nine squares distant from the Rue Dauphine, where Madame Boursin resided. We were shown into a delightful little dressing-room, and

Madame Victorine assisted me in giving the last touches to my bridal toilet, which was very simple. I wore a dress of fine, white India mull, trimmed with lace. I wore no veil, but had a few white flowers in my hair and on my bosom, which Dr. Hilton had placed in my hand when he came for me, whispering as he did so a few tender and reassuring words.

I was quite ready when Dr. Hilton presented himself at the door of my dressing-room, and as we proceeded into the adjoining apartment, where a small company was assembled, I trembled with such excessive embarrassment, that I was scarcely conscious of anything around me.

The ceremony was performed by Judge Guinard, a magistrate, and in the English language, of which I understood but a few words. After it was over, the gentlemen present, who had acted as witnesses, and who were all friends of Dr. Hilton's, were presented to me—Dr. Martinet, Mr. Blackburn, and Dr. Ross. Madame Victorine, and the female servant who had been engaged to take charge of our apartments, were also present. Several guests came in afterward, who were all strangers to me, and many were the wishes expressed for our happiness and prosperity.

After our friends had left us, we went to the Opera; but as the piece which was being performed was a very sad one, and affected me very unpleasantly, Dr. Hilton proposed returning home before the close of the Opera, which we did. Thus ended my wedding-day. At this time, I lacked two months of being fifteen years old, and in my extreme ignorance of all the falseness and duplicity of human nature, I fondly dreamed that the perfect happiness in which I then breathed and lived, would endure forever. I was like the purple and golden-hued butterfly, that revels in the rich, warm atmosphere of summer, without fear or knowledge of the frosts and snows of winter. Hope and joy fluttered white-winged before me, leading the way into the unknown lands of the future. Ah, so far before me they flew, that I soon lost sight of the gleaming of their radiant pinions, and I have never since beheld them as on that happy day, face to face.

The day after our marriage, we went to Boulogne for a short excursion; we took our dinner at the hotel, and I was as pleased as a child, with everything I saw.

The following day we drove all over Paris, and I saw more of that beautiful city than I had ever done before. Dr. Hilton took great interest in pointing out the finest buildings, and relating to me many interesting historical details connected with them. We also visited numerous other places, the remembrance of which is still vivid, and which seem, to this time, glowing with the halo which the happiness of that day cast over them.

There was the Museum, one of the largest and most wonderful in the world, embracing the finest collections in all the departments of science. The lovely gardens, where the rarest and most beautiful flowers bloomed, and musical fountains played; the magnificent promenades, and the noble statues; in short, I fully realized, by actual observation, that Paris could not be surpassed by any other city on the globe; that she fully deserved all the praises sung by the poets in her honor, and fulfilled the prophecies of the wise men concerning her. We drove also to the Column Vendome, but I was too weary and fatigued to mount to the summit, as every one is expected to do, and we returned home. I was delighted and enraptured with the day's experiences, and with the many new impressions I had received. Dr. Hilton laughingly remarked that it was an unusual thing for a foreigner to enact the *role of cicerone* to a native.

A glass of iced lemonade aided in dispelling my weariness, and we spent the evening at home.

The next day, my husband took me to the Faubourg St. Germain to call upon his former hostess, Madame de Grigny, who was also a warm and devoted friend. She insisted upon our spending the day with her; and before it was over, Dr. Hilton had concluded to take rooms for a month or two with her, for several of his American friends were boarding there, and consequently he thought it would be pleasant for me as well as for himself. The hotel was a very fine one, and was

conducted on the American plan, and was much frequented by Americans.

Judge Guinard was one of its inmates, and I soon had the pleasure of making his acquaintance. He was a gentleman of about forty years of age, very tall, but with an imposing figure; his hair and beard were black, but were slightly streaked with gray. He possessed one of the noblest and kindest hearts that ever dwelt in the breast of man, and was universally beloved and respected by every one who knew him. He was an American by birth.

A few weeks after we were settled, Dr. Hilton was obliged to leave me for a short period to go to *Suisse* on business. A few days after he had gone, I missed Judge Guinard from the *table d'hôte* where I always met him; and, on my inquiring for him, Madame de Grigny informed me that he was very ill. His friends spoke lightly of his illness, and consequently I was not uneasy about him, although I missed him; for I had grown to like him very much. Daily, however, he grew worse; and, as the days passed on, he frequently expressed the greatest anxiety to see Dr. Hilton, and often asked, in the most eager manner, if he had returned.

Just at this time, I received my first letter from my husband; and when the servant brought it to me, I kissed it many times before I opened it. It ran as follows:

"MA CHÈRE PETITE LAURE:—Are you wearying for my coming, my pet? I can fancy that you are; for I am so lonely and forlorn without you, that every hour seems to have gained an equal quantity of time, and is heavy with its unaccustomed burden. The day lacks light and glory, and the night is filled with clouds and darkness.

My eyes literally ache with longing for the sight of you. The *Suisse* ladies are famed for their beauty, as you know, and I have met several of them; but I have seen none that can be compared with *ma petite Laure*. You may look for me, my darling, the day after you receive this letter. I kiss you a thousand times. Yours devotedly,

"J. HILTON."

I have this letter still; through all the weary years of my troubled life, that message from him I worshipped so wildly, breathing of love and devotion to me as truly as the flower breathes perfume, has been with me a mute reminder of that happy time that has fled from me forever! Just as I had finished reading my precious letter, Madame de Grigny rushed hastily into my room, and exclaimed, with a frightened, pallid face:

"Oh, Madame Hilton! come quickly, I pray you. Judge Guinard is dying, and he is calling for you. Oh, come quickly!"

I was shocked beyond measure, and so bewildered by the sudden news that I knew not what to do. Madame de Grigny seized me by the hands and pulled me after her, until, regaining my senses, I mechanically followed her through the wide halls until we stood at Judge Guinard's door, where Dr. Ross met us, and led me into the chamber.

As soon as the dying man saw me, he wildly threw up his hands, and gasped with a painful, choking utterance: "Oh, Madame, Madame! where is Dr. Hilton?"

I eagerly showed him my letter, and told him that I expected that my husband would return the next day. He did not seem to notice what I said, or rather, did not understand me; he held out his hand to me, and I took it within my own, but shrank back terrified from its cold, clammy touch. His eyes were fastened upon my face with the most intense longing in their gaze, and his lips moved in the vain endeavor to give utterance to the words which he evidently wished to say to me; but the mysterious power of death, working slowly yet surely in his brain, confusing its clear preceptions and its busy thoughts, held the secret in its icy clasp, which he wished to yield to me, and refused to let it issue through the portals of speech. The clergyman approached, and solemnly enjoined upon him to give his last thoughts to Heaven, and to his Heavenly Father, whom he was so soon to meet. He turned uneasily upon his pillow and laughed incredulously, and then with an uncertain gesture, motioned the clergyman to stand

aside. Oh, it was a fearful, a horrible sight. Death was laying his seal upon every lineament of the ghastly face, and distorting them into merely a semblance of the fine, noble countenance I knew so well; and so steadfast was the gaze with which he followed me, so imploring, and yet forboding its expression, that, unable to endure it any longer I fled from the room. Ah, that gaze haunts me still. I see it in the still hours of the night, when sleep refused to come to me; and I see it in my dreams, until I wake in affright, and live over again in thought that dreadful death-scene. Immediately after I left the room, the dying man closed his eyes, and died.

That night I was tormented and pursued by frightful dreams. I thought I was toiling along a dreary road that stretched out interminably before me, with its borders barren of grass or herbage. Brown and dead, the scant verdure along the way seemed as if a scorching fire had passed over it, and the heat seemed still to linger in the heavy yielding sand, which closed over my weary feet with a burning grasp painful to endure. It was with the greatest difficulty that I could drag one tired foot after the other; and, horrible to bear, with his cold, clammy grasp pressing upon my wrist like a band of iron, and with that terrible gaze fastened upon my face, was the skeleton form of Judge Guinard, keeping pace with me. I would hear him calling me in a hollow voice, that rung like the echoes wakened in a tomb by the clanging of the iron doors; and, at last, nerving myself to do so by a desperate effort, I answered him. The attempt to speak awakened me at once, and distinctly I heard repeated, three or four times, in wailing tones, the words, "Poor child, alas, poor child!" Was it a prophetic warning, thus given to me by a restless spirit that left earth burdened with reproach and regret? Ah! I did not think so then, but the events of the next few years caused me to remember but too well the terror of that night. The next night, at a very late hour, Dr. Hilton returned; and, not wishing to disturb me, proceeded toward Judge Guinard's room to stay with him the remainder of the night, as had been his custom. The *concierge* met him, and

told him of the sad event. Shocked and grieved, he hastened to Dr. Ross to learn the particulars, and remained with him until morning.

Soon after day-break he came to me. I threw myself into his arms and cried:

"Oh, thank God, you have come back. I have been so distressed, so unhappy. I have such sad, sad news for you."

"Oh, Laure, Laure," he said in a sorrowful voice; "do not speak, I know all. Oh, if I had only remained at home, that I might have been with him. How can I apprise his friends in America of their great loss?"

The associations about the hotel had now become very painful; and, consequently, we decided to change our lodgings. We secured apartments in the *Rue Deseine*, which were very pleasant, and with which I was much pleased. The windows of my *boudoir* opened upon a light, graceful balcony, where many beautiful and fragrant plants were arranged in luxuriant profusion. Dr. Hilton furnished the rooms in the most elegant manner, the furniture being selected with great care and exquisite taste, and entirely with the view of gratifying my love for beauty and luxury. In those rooms were spent the happiest days of my married life. Around the shrine whereon my household gods were raised, clustered the pure spirits of love, peace, and hope, blending their low, sweet voices in a blessed harmony, whose melody was undisturbed by discord or dissonance. The love existing between my husband and myself was perfect in its strength and unison. Nothing could exceed his tender devotion to me, and my heart was so entirely his, that I could not conceive a thought which did not tend toward him as its object, or entertain a hope of which he was not the centre and the pride.

## CHAPTER XII.

## MY FATHER'S REQUEST.

SOON after we were fairly established in our pleasant lodgings, my dream of happiness was rudely disturbed by a furious letter from my father, which made me miserable for a little time. He reproached me for deceiving him, and called me an ungrateful, disobedient child; and cruelly predicted that my future life would be full of sorrow and remorse. My husband endeavored to soothe away the distress occasioned by this unkind letter, but only partially succeeded in effacing the terror that it had inspired, when I received an antidote for its baleful effects, in the shape of a long and affectionate letter from my dear mother, who freely forgave me for the step I had taken, and assured me of the continued love and prayers of herself and my sister Elise; adding that she hoped, in time, to soften the resentment of my father.

Madame Boursin and Rosine also came to see me, and I was delighted at being again reinstated in the favor of Madame, who had ever been to me a kind, good friend.

The Christmas holidays were now approaching, and many were the amusements and gayeties in which we participated. Dr. Ross, an American gentleman and an intimate personal friend of my husband, issued cards for an elegant *fête*, to be given at his own hotel, the guests being invited for two nights and the intervening day. I cannot omit a description of this entertainment, for it was truly magnificent.

A slight indisposition forced me to remain at home the first evening; but the next morning I found myself free from headache, and entirely recovered; and, as soon as possible, made my arrangements for joining the gay company already assembled at the hotel of Dr. Ross.

An amusing incident occurred during the progress of my toilette, which causes me to laugh, even now, whenever I

recall it. I possessed a very heavy suit of hair, which was as black as the raven's wing. Dr. Hilton was very proud of its great length and luxuriance, and in order to have it arranged in the most becoming manner, he sent for a *coiffeur*, and superintended himself the process of dressing it. He gave directions to the hair-dresser to arrange it after the style of the American ladies, and told him how the belles "over the water" wore their hair when he was last in America. I quietly submitted my head to the torture inflicted by the puzzled hair-dresser, but mentally vowed that I would not attend the party disfigured as I foresaw that I should be. When the arrangement of my hair was completed, Dr. Hilton came up to see the effect, assuming a critical manner that was really amusing. I saw that he did not seem as well pleased as he anticipated being. He took up a small hand-glass, and held it before me, saying, seriously:

"Do not laugh, my little one; it will spoil the effect."

I fairly screamed with laughter, and could scarcely say to the poor hair-dresser, who said, in the most deprecating manner:

"Please, Madame, do not tell any one who dressed your hair."

"Oh! no; my husband shall enjoy the pleasure of having his taste admired."

Dr. Hilton could endure it no longer; he ordered the rearrangement of my hair, laughingly saying:

"Hereafter, I bow to the goddess of fashion; for she causes each style to be becoming while it is in vogue."

The time occupied by my toilette had passed so quickly, that we were not aware how much of it had been consumed, and it was quite late when we reached the hotel. The greater number of the guests had gone to visit the *Jardin des Plantes*, and as I had never visited that beautiful place, we also went thither. It was but a short distance from the hotel, and we had no difficulty in finding the party whom we were seeking.

We first entered a spacious and magnificent garden, arranged with perfect symmetry and order, containing numer-

ous conservatories, wherein almost every flower and plant, from all parts of the world, were growing and flourishing, in all their endless variety, as luxuriantly as in their native soil. The air was filled with a soft haze, and seemed to possess color and weight, as though the delicious perfumes that floated from the cups of the blossoms were visible to the sight and palpable to the touch. Passing through this garden, we entered into what seemed to be a lovely miniature forest, but which was, in reality, an extensive aviary, where birds from every clime were flying from branch to branch of the waving trees; some of bright and brilliant plumage, that flashed in the sunshine like glittering flakes of gold, or shining jewels gleaming with red and green lustre; and some of sober, quiet hue, who nestled under the leaves, as though feeling the contrast between themselves and their gorgeous companions; but as if in compensation for the want of outward adorning, I noticed the sweetest and richest bursts of melody poured forth from the throats of the plainest birds.

Dr. Hilton had often spoken to me of the mocking-bird of America, and I eagerly asked him if there were any of that species among the collection. He looked about for a few moments, and then, suddenly discovering the object of his search, said to me: "Look, Laure; there he is on the end of that long, slender limb. Don't you see it swaying beneath his weight? There is no breeze to move it so."

I looked, and saw a plain, brown bird, who looked large and awkward amongst so many radiant ones. I had expected to see a bird of beauty as well as of song, and was about to express my disappointment, when, as if to resent the speech that trembled on my lips, such a gush of melody issued from his swelling throat that hushed me into wondering silence, and drew around the proud little singer a crowd of delighted listeners. He appeared to be in perfect ecstasy with his own performance; for he would throw himself up in the air in the wildest and most absurd way, executing all the antics of a circus-rider, all the while making the air resound with his sweet, bewildering song. I longed to linger in this enchant-

ing spot; but the crowd pressed on, and we could loiter no longer. We then entered a large and splendid building, in the roof of the main hall of which, was a magnificent glass dome, and immediately beneath it a pure, miniature lake of clear, sparkling water, wherein sported thousands of dazzling gold and silver fish, which looked, as they darted through the water, like bits of sunshine caught and prisoned in the keeping of the laughing waves. Around the walls of the building were many glass cases, filled with specimens of various kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and insects, stuffed and otherwise, prepared in the most perfect manner, rivalling life in all, save the faculty of motion. Upon one of the shelves, I noticed a fly, and was about to brush it away with the remark that it was strange to see an insect like that in a place where the temperature was so cool, when I discovered that it was one of the prepared specimens, placed there probably for the purpose of deceiving such innocent sight-seers as myself.

It would take a long time to describe all the wonders and curiosities that filled this beautiful spot; and had I the "pen of a ready writer," I should be tempted to continue the description; but I fear that I should only weary my readers. We consumed the greater part of the day in wandering through this charming domain, and returned to the hotel only when we were too weary to remain any longer. The guests who had remained at home were amusing themselves with music, games of different kinds, and tableaux, in which we soon joined. There had been no dancing during the day, as the most of the company were fatigued with the exertions of the night before, and wished to keep themselves as fresh as possible for the coming one. As our apartments were adjoining the hotel, I returned home to rest for an hour before making my toilette, for the evening's entertainment, which was to be the crowning glory of the *fête*.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE BALL.

MY toilette for the evening was not an affair of a moment; for Dr. Hilton was unusually solicitous about my appearance, and expressed much anxiety lest my dress should not be perfect in all its details. I, on the contrary, was entirely indifferent, for I felt strangely dull and stupid, and had not enjoyed with my usual zest the numerous pleasures that had enlivened the *grande affaire*, but to please my husband I exerted myself to look as well as possible. The majority of the guests were Americans, and I knew that he wished his countrymen to admire his little French wife.

The preparations for that last night of the *fête* had been conducted under the directions of Dr. Ross, and were on a grand scale—the *coup d'œil* was wonderful.

On reaching the hotel, I was conducted to a beautiful apartment, which was arranged as a boudoir, and used as a dressing-room for the ladies. The walls were lined with mirrors, which reflected on every side the lovely forms that flitted like butterflies from one side of the room to the other, viewing themselves and each other, with genuine, undisguised admiration.

At the farther end of this lovely apartment, a large mirror was imbedded in the wall, corresponding in size with the others; but in place of the massive gilt frames which adorned them, it was surrounded by a garland of many-hued and brilliant flowers, which were exquisitely painted on the white wall. I was sure that the garland was real, so artistically was it done; the wall rounding in to the mirror, which reflected in its bright depths the drooping, heavily laden sprays, that seemed fairly to tremble beneath their weight of blossoms.

While I stood transfixed with admiration at this charming sight, I heard a musical, metallic sound, like the vibration of

a silvery-mouthed time-piece just before it strikes the hour, and looking upward, above the mirror, I saw what at first appeared to me to be an exquisite painting, but which, on close inspection, proved to be an ivory tablet emblazoned in letters of gold. It was of an oval shape, with a wreath of roses and lilies encircling it, and the golden letters on its snowy surface combined to form my name, together with a well-turned compliment in verse. While I was gazing in wonder at this trick of magic art, for such it seemed to me, a lady approached and said:

“Oh, Madame, I am not surprised at your being charmed with this delicate and unique device of our host; we have each, in turn, been the recipient of a similar agreeable attention. Ah, here comes another lady; now, if you will only step aside, Madame, and watch closely, you will discover the secret of this mystery—that is, if your eyes are sharp enough.”

As the new-comer approached and stood before the mirror, I could not refrain from admiring her, for she was very lovely and graceful; there was a natural unaffectedness and simplicity in her manner, which gave it a charm that was exceedingly captivating. She did not even glance at her beautiful reflection, but burst into rapturous exclamations of delight and wonder, over the magnificent mirror and its fairy-like embellishments. Then again that soft, musical sound vibrated upon our ears, and I glanced upward in time to see my name disappear from the ivory tablet, and that of the stranger take its place, “Mademoiselle Marguerite Dètiron,” while beneath it remained the sweet little compliment embodied in verse.

This charming conceit served to introduce us to each other in a somewhat novel, but very agreeable manner.

The *modus operandi* of this device was extremely simple. Small ivory tablets had been prepared, each one bearing the name of an invited guest. By a preconcerted arrangement, the name of each lady, as she entered, was communicated to a gentleman occupying a small closet in the rear of the dress-

ing-room, and who superintended the placing and displacing of the tablets, which were afterward distributed among the ladies. I have mine still in my possession, although somewhat tarnished and discolored.

The supper table was gorgeous beyond description; the principal decoration being a pyramid of lights of all colors, symmetrically arranged; over each jet of gas was a brilliant glass globe of tiny size, which produced an indescribable effect. How this was done I do not know, but the effect was like a grand display of fire-works, with the additional attraction of being permanent. The table, like all other tables at such entertainments, groaned beneath its burden of luxury and profusion. The wine flowed in abundance, and the subtle aroma arising from the champagne exhilarated and almost intoxicated the senses of those who, like myself, refrained from quenching our thirst with the golden beverage.

Something, I know not what, had occurred during the evening to disturb the good nature of Dr. Hilton, and after returning to our apartments, I found him reserved and *distracted*. I gave him a description of the charming boudoir, and beautiful magic mirror, when, to my surprise he said ill-naturedly, and with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders:

"Bad taste—exceedingly bad taste. I wonder that Dr. Ross should adopt anything so decidedly Frenchy."

I must confess that I pouted at this; for it made me indignant to hear anything connected with *la belle France* spoken of as absurd.

The next morning we again went over to the hotel, to join the company assembled there before they dispersed, and to bid all our friends adieu. The morning was bright and sunny, but frosty. The street in front of the hotel presented a lively and stirring appearance; for vehicles of all kinds, from the fairy-like volante, to the close, family barouche, were drawn up to the curb-stone, from one end of the square to the other. The impatient and restive horses were champing at their bits, and only waiting for a word from their drivers to speed off like the wind.

The gentlemen, too, were fast becoming impatient, for the ladies had long since retired to their dressing-rooms to make ready for their departure. However, they did not murmur much, as long as their segars lasted; but, when the last puff of smoke had floated from their lips, their complaints grew both loud and deep.

I was standing in the embrasure of a window in the *salon de dance*, chatting with some of my friends, and enjoying the manifest impatience of the gentlemen; for I was in the secret of the delay. The ladies still remained absent, and some of the gentlemen begged me to go and see what was the reason that they were kept so long in attendance; but I laughingly refused, saying:

"No doubt Dr. Ross has persuaded them to remain another day. You know his powers of persuasion are unequalled."

At last, "Here they come!—here they are!" cried the impatient ones.

We heard a murmuring of voices, then suppressed shrieks of laughter. The door flew open, and in poured a motley group, all in masks and dominos, and disguised beyond the possibility of recognition.

Then there ensued an amusing and a perplexing scene that created a great deal of mirth and merriment.

The gentlemen were evidently expected to recognize their wives, daughters, or sweethearts; for the merry musical voices all clamored:

"We are ready to go home;" and the bewildered ones commenced the puzzling task of selecting their proper companions. If any gentleman, in seeking for his respective lady, chanced to pause before the right one, assisted by some trick of manner or speech that seemed familiar, she would bow ceremoniously, making a low, sweeping courtesy, politely and gravely ignoring the proffered claims; which would completely baffle the puzzled seeker. After amusing themselves in this manner, until they had exhausted the patience of their cavaliers, they allowed themselves to be recognized, seemingly, and escorted to their carriages.



I overheard one gentleman remark to a fair lady upon his arm, in a triumphant tone:

"I knew I was not mistaken, dearest. You can never deceive me. I would recognize you under any disguise."

After seating themselves in the carriages, the ladies finally unmasked, and then there ensued another scene of confusion and dismay. It was very laughable. The gentlemen, on all sides, were springing out of their seats, and assisting the ladies to alight; for, in but three or four cases, had they selected their proper companions. Shouts of laughter rung on the air. Embarrassed bows, and deprecatingly-polite speeches, were made by the gentlemen, and half-murmured reproofs fell from the lips, and reproachful glances from the eyes, of the ladies, who, although they had succeeded admirably in their attempt at disguising themselves, were manifestly mortified at not being recognized by the penetrating eyes of their husbands and lovers. I looked for the gentleman, whose tender remark I had overheard, and saw him escorting to her own proper conveyance the lady to whom he had expressed himself in such a decided manner, and who had proved to be the wife of an intimate friend, and old enough to be his mother.

When the last carriage had rattled away with its load of weary revellers, we returned home; but finding it impossible to settle ourselves to a state of quietude, Dr. Hilton proposed going to the Pantheon. I willingly assented, and we there witnessed the play of *La fille du Regiment*, which at that time was quite new to me. That evening we played dominos, a game of which Dr. Hilton was exceedingly fond. I won ten dollars from him; we played for very small sums; but as I was the keeper of the purse, my winnings were not separated from the general fund.

Thus smoothly and pleasantly the days, weeks, and months of our happy married life glided by; and time, in his rapid flight, bore from me only love and happiness. I had not a wish ungratified, although it would have been only a pleasure to me to have had the opportunity of convincing my beloved

husband that I could be content with little—with deprivations even, for his sake.

His inability to surround me with all the luxuries and elegances that could be supplied only by an unlimited fortune, was, I am convinced, the only thing that marred his happiness; for I am certain that he was truly happy in those roseate, halcyon days of life and love.

And as for me, I loved him with all the devotion of my young and ardent soul—with all the fervor of a naturally impassioned nature—with all the strength of a warm and trusting heart, and I can never be otherwise than grateful to him for his loving devotion and care for me during that charming spring-time of our wedded life.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE GRACEFUL BOW AND ITS RESULT.

SOME time before the acquaintance of Dr. Hilton and myself had commenced, he had been taking lessons in French from Monsieur L'apèse, a professor of the French language, who, since our marriage, came often to spend an evening with his former pupil.

One evening, my husband and myself were occupied in hanging some beautiful white curtains to my windows, which I fancied would embellish my room. (We always performed such little offices for ourselves.) Dr. Hilton had placed a chair upon the table, and was standing upon it, in order to reach to the top of the window, while I was holding or embracing the chair with both arms to keep it in a firm position.

We heard a knock upon the door. I called "*entrez*," and Monsieur L'apèse came in.

"Oh!" said he, "what a cosy domestic scene. Do not trouble yourself to make your bow, my dear boy. I can dis-

pense with it, seeing that it is impossible for you to make one, if you would."

"Thank you," replied Dr. Hilton; "but I can make you as finished a bow, even from this elevated and not over-graceful position, as if I were standing by your side;" and, suiting the action to the word, he made the attempt; but the chair shook and trembled beneath him. He bowed too low; and, striving to recover his balance, he fell to the floor. Fortunately, he was not at all hurt, and rose with a merry laugh; but I had received such a shock, that I turned deathly sick, faint, and giddy, and reeled as though I were about to fall. My husband sprang to my side in an instant, and supported me until I began to recover my senses. I still felt weak and ill, however, and both gentlemen entreated me to retire early to my chamber; and I did so, leaving them to the quiet enjoyment of their cigars.

I soon found that I had made a mistake in retiring while my nerves were in such an excited condition; for I could not calm myself, and, of course, could not sleep. I felt that if I remained alone in the silence of my own room, I should soon indulge in an uncontrollable fit of weeping, which was my husband's abhorrence; so, hastily donning my *robe de chambre*, I returned to the apartment which I had left so recently. Dr. Hilton and M. L'apèse were sitting with their backs toward me, and did not perceive my entrance. M. L'apèse was speaking, and the first few words that he uttered arrested my steps, and caused me to withdraw a little, and listen eagerly to the conversation.

"Dr. Hilton," said he, "you must pardon the liberty I am taking; but you have been a pupil of mine, to whom I have become much attached, and I must speak. You have a young and charming wife; and I hear that you are about to return to America, and leave her here alone. Is this so?"

I felt as though a sharp, stinging wire was thrust into my ears, and Dr. Hilton's voice sounded like a trumpet blown in the far distance as he replied:

"It is true that I have received a letter from my father,

who orders me to come home. Some meddlesome, impertinent scoundrel has written to him that I am married, and he threatens to advance me no more money; consequently, I am compelled to go to America. I shall leave *ma petite* Laure here; but in three or four months I shall either return or send for her. I have had this letter in my possession for several weeks; but I love Laure better than my life, and cannot bear to inflict upon her the unhappiness which these tidings will surely give her. The thought of even this short separation makes me miserable, and I am determined that she shall not know it until just before I am about to leave her."

I suppressed the cry of anguish that trembled on my lips, and returning to my room, I knew not how, I fell upon my knees, and praying for strength, I silently determined to conceal the knowledge I had thus acquired from my husband, until he was ready, voluntarily, to impart it to me. I felt that whatever he did would be right. I knew how straitened his circumstances were, and just what he could afford, and I would not make him unhappy by seeing me sad until the awful moment should arrive, when he himself should announce to me the sad tidings of his intended departure.

I now comprehended the cause of the frequent fits of gloomy abstraction to which he had been subject, and which I had construed into fears that we were living beyond our means.

On the morning succeeding the evening when I had overheard the sad news which had destroyed my peace of mind, Dr. Ross came in to see Dr. Hilton, and ask from him the temporary loan of fifty dollars.

Dr. Hilton said: "I think I can oblige you, but I shall have to ask Laure first, for she holds the purse strings," and turning to me he said: "*Ma petite*," (he always called me by this pet name; and oh, how sweet, how caressingly it sounded as it fell from his lips,) "will you be kind enough to loan Dr. Ross some money?" and then added playfully: "Can you count fifty dollars?" I assured him that I could count, not only fifty, but two hundred and seventy, which was all that the purse contained. He laughed and said:

"See, Dr. Ross! she is not only pretty and clever, but she is economical, *ma petite* Laure."

Ah, how the memory of these little trifling incidents clings to me, until I sometimes wonder whether my youth was not a dream, or if that were all reality. Am I not dreaming now? and when shall I waken again to the joy and happiness that gladdened me of old?

## CHAPTER XV.

### AN ASSUMED CHEERFULNESS.

AFTER the event narrated in the last chapter, I became sad and melancholy, despite all my efforts to ~~seem~~ cheerful and gay. The knowledge that I had acquired, and the necessity of concealing it weighed heavily upon me. I realized the truth of the story of the sword of Damocles, of which I had somewhere read, for I knew that the certainty of my husband's departure for America, would pierce my heart as surely as the sharpest sword, and this knowledge hung suspended only by a thread of days or weeks above me.

Dr. Hilton noticed my sadness, and was continually devising means to divert and amuse me. It was at this time that we visited the beautiful cemetery of Père la Chaise, in company with a large party of friends who had persuaded us to join them. I had never been there; and the impressions that my susceptible mind received on that memorable visit are as vivid and fresh as if it were but yesterday that I stood among the white and shining monuments of that beautiful place.

We first drove through a long, well shaded avenue of trees, at the termination of which could be seen the huge iron gates flanked on either side by a white stone building, occupied by the porter, who politely requested us to descend from the carriage, handing us at the same time a miniature plan of the grounds;

by the aid of which we could easily find the principal monuments, tombs and statues, and the tombs wherein the remains of some celebrated statesman or hero reposed.

This lovely "City of the Dead" is symmetrically laid out in squares, intersected by avenues and alleys running at right angles with each other, and with the name of each affixed to a sign-board at every crossing. These names were very pretty. I remember, however, only a few of them: Chesnut, Magnolia and Laurel were the names of some of the avenues, while to the alleys, which were not as broad as the avenues, were affixed such names as Garland, Daisy, Sunny, and the like. They were all kept beautifully white and clean. Other portions of the grounds were left as nature had designed them, and were indeed lovely. I wandered a little apart from my companions, and climbed upon a huge rock, which had evidently been covered with a thick carpet of green, soft moss in the summer, but was now gray and bare. A tiny stream rippled across its base, with a low, sweet murmur, that sounded like a fitting accompaniment for some solemn funeral hymn.

I gazed down upon the level plain beneath, dotted over with the pure, white monuments of the dead, and was slowly yielding to the solemn influences and thoughts that the solitude engendered, when I was startled from my reverie by the voice of one of my companions calling my name. I hastily sprang down, and, in answer to her questions of "why I had remained so long from them," and "of what was I dreaming," I said, expressing only the pent-up thoughts that had been gathering in my mind:

"Oh, Valerie, I was so glad to get away even from the sound of your voices. How calm, how beautiful it is here; this profound silence has such a soothing charm for me; it fills me, too, with religious awe and reverence, and I can fully realize that the Lord is, indeed, 'in his Holy Temple!' Do you not remember, Valerie, that scene described in the New Testament of the garden of Gethsemane, where our Saviour, with a few chosen ones, retired to pray, just before his crucifixion? Does

not the reading of that touching scene always impress you with a feeling of profound stillness and calm repose? You can almost see the kneeling and slumbering figures of the worn-out disciples, forgetting in sleep the danger and trouble that menaced their beloved Lord. Poor human nature, how very weak and yielding it is. And one can see with the eyes of imagination, the glorious form of Him 'who died to save,' with uplifted face and streaming eyes, imploring: 'Oh, Father, if it be Thy will, let this cup pass from me;' but how soon did the divine nature within Him triumph over the human weakness. That night of agony must have been spent amid such scenes as this, with only the moon and stars to witness His weary vigils."

Valerie stared at me in surprise; she did not understand that sorrow had been dwelling in my heart, pent up, and unexpressed, for some time, and consequently did not know the relief that it was to speak of another and greater sorrow, beside which mine was only as a drop of water to the wide ocean; but had not I, too, prayed that this cup might pass from me? Valerie said, after a moment:

"You are very tired, Laure, come and sit down on one of these low mounds, and let us rest." I assented, and we were about doing so, when Dr. Hilton came up and objected. There were, he said, plenty of iron chairs and comfortable seats, if I wished to rest, but I must not sit upon the ground. I declined sitting down at all, and so we proceeded on our ramble. We soon came to a lovely artificial lake, whereon glided many snowy white swans, so tame they would come up close to the banks and take food from our hands. These beautiful and magnificent birds were imported from Egypt, and were, I believe, a present to the Emperor.

Among the principal monuments were those of bygone kings and queens, and many other personages of royal blood; celebrated poets and authors, who starved while living, but reposed calmly and sweetly under splendid and costly monuments when dead; together with many magnificent piles erected in honor of our famous naval and military heroes,

who yielded their last drop of blood in defence of their beloved country; and also of our departed noble and eloquent statesmen, who wore their lives away in laboring for their nation's welfare.

The tall spires of these beautiful monuments shone glittering and glorified in the golden rays of the sun, now going slowly down the sky toward the twilight lands, and crowning with the fullness of his beams the mute and honored tributes erected over the ashes of the beloved dead, in faint resemblance, as it seemed, of that resplendent glory of heaven shining over their departed souls.

The monument erected to Eloise and Abelard is, perhaps, one of the most beautiful in the cemetery, and I stood long before it, admiring its exquisite loveliness and the wonderful and masterly skill of its execution. The statues of the two lovers stand side by side, she with her right hand clasped in his. They are life-size, and the likenesses are undoubtedly correct, as they are said to be from the original. The pedestal upon which these figures stand is covered with the most beautiful and delicately-carved delineations of scenes in the lives of this remarkable couple, one of the most perfect and exquisite of which is the portrayal of the visit of Eloise to the tomb of Abelard. The abandonment of grief was never more accurately rendered in marble than in every curve of her relaxed and drooping figure, while the upward, despairing glance of her eyes betrays the utter sorrow and hopelessness which time cannot alleviate, nor salt tears wash away.

The artist who conceived and executed this wonderful piece of art is immortalized by it. Oh, the glorious and imperishable fame that follows and rewards the skill of the sculptor's chisel, and the brush of the painter, whose works live for ages after the cunning hands and teeming brain are crumbled into dust! But oh, how cold and unsatisfactory is, to us, the idea of fame, that comes after we are lying forgotten in our tomb! What matters the laudations and praises of the world when the ear, upon which they would fall like sweetest music, is deaf and cold?—closed, by the terrible touch of death, to

all earthly noises. These thoughts passed through my mind as I rendered my tribute of admiration before the splendid monument I have striven to describe, and which was the last one which I examined, for it was now growing late; and although I was still disposed to linger, Dr. Hilton urged our departure. I was very weary, and very sad. We stopped at the Hotel de Paris, and drank a cup of coffee, and I ate an apple, which my husband insisted upon buying for me. I had objected to this purchase; for, although the fruit was very ripe and beautiful, it was very dear, the vender asking three francs for a single apple. Dr. Hilton said, in reply to my remonstrances:

"When you glanced at those apples, Laure, your speaking eyes said, very plainly: 'I wish for one;' and I wish that I could gratify all your desires as easily as I can this one. You are my guardian angel, and you give me always pure, good thoughts. I am never happy unless I am by your side;" and he looked at me so tenderly and strangely that I almost cried out, fearing that he was about to tell me that our parting was near. Ah, I could not have borne it then!

After we had returned home, I was obliged to retire early, for I was terribly fatigued; and my dreams that night were fugitive and frightful. Open graves yawned on every side of the pathway I was toiling over; and sometimes it was my husband, and sometimes myself, that was being precipitated into their cold embraces. We were always separated; for, with all my struggling to reach him, he was ever removed from me—separated from me by a yawning chasm, or a wide-mouthed, open grave. Who shall say that there is no significance in dreams? Not I, indeed; for I have dreamed "dreams that were not all dreams," but foreshadowed truth, and presaged with exactness their own fulfillment.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## DR. HILTON'S REQUEST.

A few days after our visit to Père La Chaise, Dr. Hilton said to me: "*Ma petite*, I have been thinking all day."

"Well, tell me what your thoughts have been," I said, trembling.

"I have been thinking about your sister Elise, and wondering if you would not like to have her come and make you a visit."

I divined at once what this was for, and understood his motive. I trembled, but did not speak; I thought how kind and thoughtful he was, thus to endeavor to prepare some comfort and consolation for me. I crossed the room and stood beside him; he was busily engaged in taking his pipe to pieces and cleaning it. I took it from him, and seating myself upon his knee, and putting my arms about his neck, I said gently: "My husband, I thank you very much; you have always been so kind, so good, so thoughtful, that I love you more than words can express. I cannot be grateful enough to you, for I know not how to repay you."

He pressed me more closely to him, and said, smilingly:

"Why, do you desire it so much? Let us then arrange it at once; will you write, or go for her?"

I replied: "Oh, she will not come unless we go for her."

"We!" he repeated, looking astonished; "why, I cannot go, as you know; your father is still so furious with me that I dare not venture into his presence; and are you not aware, Laure, that I am liable to be arrested at any moment for marrying a maiden so much under age as you are? That is the reason why I have so repeatedly cautioned you about telling your real age."

"Yes; I know that, Dr. Hilton, but I cannot go without

you; I do not wish to be one moment from your side; I am so unhappy when I am not with you."

"Why, *ma petite* Laure?"

"I do not know," I replied in a sad tone, "but you have petted and indulged me so much, that I am like a poor little dependent child; I do not know how to take care of myself. If you should leave me, I should be like the little unfledged bird left alone in the nest waiting for its mother, whom some cruel sportsman had killed. I never want to leave you, my husband, and you must never leave me."

The significance of my speech seemed to pain and startle him; he started from his chair, and walked rapidly up and down the room several times; then, calming himself, he came back, and, seating himself, made me resume my place upon his knee, and said:

"Well, Laure, you will only be absent one or two days, and I know you wish to see your home again, and your mother, and I would like to have you go. I wish very much to see your sister, and how can I gratify this wish unless she comes to us? You say she is pretty; she cannot be as pretty as you are, but if you will not give me an opportunity of judging for myself, I will punish you by thinking that she is prettier than you, and that you are afraid for me to see her; but you will go, to oblige me, will you not, *ma petite*?"

All this he said in such a caressing tone, that I knew not how to refuse; so I consented, and I also determined to try and be as cheerful as possible; but my consent was given with a heavy heart.

That evening I extorted from him a promise which I had long striven to win. Dr. Hilton was an exceedingly handsome man, and wore a long, heavy beard, of whose silky luxuriance he was very vain; but I detested this American fashion of covering the lower part of the face, by indulging in which the clear, classic contour of his mouth and chin were hidden from view. I had often importuned him to have it shaved off, and wear only a moustache, as was then the custom in Paris; but he had always refused. So, being pos-

sessed by the spirit of mischief, I told him that I would retract my consent to going for Elise unless he would comply with the condition which I should impose upon him; and I said, laughingly:

"Will you promise me, Dr. Hilton?"

"Yes, *ma petite*; although I can almost guess what it is. Is it to cut off this 'long, ugly beard' of mine, as you call it?"

"Yes, that is it; you are possessed of the spirit of divination," I answered. He made a comical face; but he kept his word, and presented himself at our late dinner with only the moustache left. He said he was like Samson, "shorn of his glory;" and I was the Delilah who had robbed him. I did not understand him exactly; but I thought him vastly handsomer than he was before.

The next day, my husband assisted me in my slight preparation for my intended visit, and packed my *sac de nuit* himself; and taking me to the cars, placed me in a comfortable seat, and was bidding me good-by, when I said, mischievously:

"Oh, Dr. Hilton! please let me take your moustache with me!"

"Oh! be still, Laure; what would you do with it?"

"Count the hairs in it, and say as many prayers as there are hairs that you will never leave me, but will love me always."

Before he could reply, the cars moved slowly out of the depot, and I waved him an adieu with my handkerchief.

I dreaded, with a dread that almost amounted to a terror, the meeting with my father; but I was very anxious to become reconciled to him, (for I was indulging in the hope that my husband would take me to America with him. I could not believe it possible that he would or could find it in his heart to leave me behind, alone and unprotected,) and I wanted to carry with me to the far-off and unknown country some fond remembrance of kind words spoken and blessings bestowed.



As I traversed very slowly the well-known path that led to the house, Elise saw me from her window. She gazed at me, shading her eyes with her hand. She recognized me, and I heard her call to our mother with a glad cry:

"Oh! *ma mère*; Laure has come! Laure is here!" and then flying down the path with outstretched arms, she embraced me again and again, expressing her delight in fond terms of endearment, and only relinquishing me to the warm embrace of my mother. Oh! how happy I was to be once more in their midst; my dear mother was looking so well, and Elise was so radiant with joy and gladness, and they all welcomed me so cordially, asking and answering so many questions that it was some time before my oft-repeated inquiry of "Where is my father?" met with a reply. My mother told me that he was absent on business; had gone to Jargeau, and would not return for one, or perhaps two weeks. She also told me that he was much excited about my marriage, and had actually threatened to enter into legal proceedings; but that his friends had reasoned with him, and persuaded him against proceeding to such an extremity; she added: "My dear child, you should always feel grateful to Monsieur Eugène, for he has been a sincere friend to you, and has done much in endeavoring to soften your father's anger toward you."

I replied with hearty warmth, "I thank M. Eugène truly; he is a true gentleman, and I shall ever remember him most gratefully." I then told my mother my errand, that in all probability we would go to America before long, and as my husband desired to see and know Elise, I had come to beg that she and my father would give their consent to her making me a little visit.

I could see the eyes of my sister growing large, and sparkling with delight at the charming prospect of a visit to Paris, and rejoiced that I had it in my power to give her so much pleasure, for I knew Dr. Hilton would spare no pains to render her visit a happy one. My mother burst into tears, and throwing her arms around me, said:

"Oh, my darling child, do not go so far from us — you will never return!" "I shall never see my Laure again!"

"When your father returns I will bring him to Paris to see you; and forbid your going. I cannot part with you, oh Laure, my child, my child!"

These broken exclamations were accompanied by so many tears and such visible distress, that it was with difficulty that we could calm her sufficiently to discuss the matter with us. She said, at last:

"Laure, I do not believe your father will let you go; he can prevent it, and the law will not only uphold him, but will enforce his commands."

I was afraid of this; but assuring my mother, with many protestations, that I should be the most wretched, the most unhappy woman on earth if I was separated from my husband. I won from her a reluctant consent that she would not tell my father of the proposed journey. It was only after a long time that she succumbed to the combined pleadings of Elise and myself, and gave her permission for Elise to accompany me to Paris, but at last we obtained it; and flying up to the room now occupied by Elise alone, and which was the same one which I used to share with her, we were soon busy in looking over her wardrobe, and engaged in the important decision of what to take, and what to leave behind; whether this jacket was pretty, and that peasant-waist becoming; and folding up ribbons, laces, and little silk aprons with nimble fingers, and otherwise arranging her pretty and well supplied wardrobe. Thus we spent the busy, happy day. Elise with all the *naivete* of innocent girlhood, anticipating, and building such pretty, fairy-like air-castles, under which I strove to place foundations that had some show of security and reality, laughing merrily at some of her wild and extravagant conceits. Oh, the beautiful, thoughtless *abandon* of youth! I looked at her blooming cheeks and sparkling eyes, and drawing her in front of the mirror, said to her:

"Come, Elise, let me see if I am not quite an old woman beside you."

But no! The excitement of the charming, busy day won back to my cheek the radiant color of my girlhood. It seemed to me as if the day of my marriage was far, far back in the past, and that years, not months, had passed since then; for I had grown strangely old and changed since I had overheard that unhappy conversation between Dr. Hilton and M. L'apèse.

Elise said, merrily; "Just see how pretty you are, Laure. I shall be jealous of you; for, when I go out with you in Paris, people will look at you, and never see me at all;" and she made up a charming little *mone*, that made me laugh.

I had never before seen Elise in such a mood. She was wont to be so grave -- so quiet; but to-day she was as sportive as a kitten, and as merry as a bird. I was so happy to have her with me, and I felt the most tender emotions of gratitude toward my husband for thus bestowing this happiness upon me.

That evening I shall never forget. It was the last one I spent at home for a very long, long time; and sadness and sorrow intervened between that day and the next one that I spent beneath my father's roof. The next morning, although it was in the winter season, and consequently cold and frosty, I went over the grounds, taking a last look at all my favorite haunts. There is little beauty about a country-place in winter; but that scene, to me, was one of loveliness and purity, and lives in my memory as distinctly and vividly as if it were an actual painting, illumined with sunlight and hung before my eager eyes upon a high and pearl-colored wall.

And when I close my weary eyes, I see the exquisite picture still of my childhood's home, and a well-known figure standing in the doorway, gazing after us as long as we were in sight; and I still hear her voice singing in my ears with melancholy cadence, uttering the desolate cry: "Oh, my child! -- my child!"

## CHAPTER XVII.

## ELISE'S VISIT.

WE crossed over to Orleans, and then spent a couple of hours with a friend, which delayed us a little on our short journey; and instead of arriving at Paris at nine o'clock, as we should otherwise have done, the bells had tolled the hour of eleven, and there was no one waiting for us. On inquiry, I learned that a gentleman, whom I recognized from the description to be Dr. Hilton, had been there to meet the nine o'clock train, but had left without waiting any longer. We took a cabriolet, and on reaching home, found Dr. Ross and my husband quietly playing cards. On our entering, they expressed much astonishment; for they had given us up for that night, and hurried us in to the fire, and busied themselves so completely in taking off our wrappings, that I almost forgot to introduce my sister Elise. When I turned to do so, I found that Dr. Hilton had already taken off her bonnet and cloak, and was drawing off her gloves, she laughing and talking, meanwhile, as though they had known each other for years; and I heard him say to her: "Poor child, how cold you are!"

Dr. Ross at once proceeded to mull some wine for us, and we were all so merry, that I soon forgot my intention of pouting because Dr. Hilton had not waited for us at the depot. His delight and hearty welcome were so evident and sincere, that I was completely disarmed, and could not be ill-natured for a moment.

After we had separated for the night, and I was alone with my husband, I asked him, half in jest, half in earnest, if he did not think Elise was prettier than I. He said with a smile: "Come here to me, *ma petite*." I was standing before the mirror taking down my hair, and I did not obey him instantly, for I had not finished the brushing which I nightly



bestowed upon my "ebon locks." I looked at his reflection in the mirror; he was standing with his elbow resting on the mantel, and was watching me very intently. When I had finished brushing and arranging my hair, I went up to him and repeated my question.

"Your sister is exceedingly pretty," he replied, "but her beauty is of an entirely different style from yours. She will be a proud, dignified-looking woman, but is not to be compared to *ma petite* Laure."

"Oh, I am so glad," I said, with a sigh of relief, and laying both hands upon his arm.

"Why are you so very glad?" asked he, laughing, and looking down in my eyes. I felt my face turn crimson, for I now saw how foolish and childish I had been, but I frankly answered:

"I was jealous, Dr. Hilton, because you took off her wrappings and cared for her so tenderly, and left me to be waited upon by Dr. Ross." He laughed with great glee, and said:

"Were you indeed jealous, *ma pauvre petite*?" and then very seriously he added: "Before I ever utter a word of love or admiration to any other woman than you, my own precious wife, the skies will fall;" pointing upward as he spoke, and raising his eyes to heaven. I nestled more closely to him, and begged his forgiveness for doubting him.

The next morning we all met at the breakfast-table, and made merry over the irresistibly comic manner of Elise, as she imitated the different cries that had awakened her, intoning them with the peculiar drawling sound that is invariably the accompaniment of the street-cries of Paris. One of her most successful imitations, and also one of the most ridiculous, was that of the merchant selling seed for pet birds, "*Du grain d'oiseaux*;" and also that of the butcher, "*Voici du mouton, du bœuf, du veau, et du*," etc., which she gave with a ludicrous effect that made us laugh heartily.

During her visit there was no opportunity neglected of enabling Elise to gain only pleasant experiences of Paris; and our days were passed in sight-seeing and excursions to

different places of interest, and our evenings in visiting places of amusement. It was a great pleasure to me to see how thoroughly she appreciated everything. Nothing daunted her spirits, and her serene, sunny temper was invariably the same, whether the skies shone blue and cloudless, or were sullen and sour, and casting torrents of rainy tears upon the earth in token of their displeasure.

The greatest passion that Elise evinced, was for the Opera. I have never met one so intensely appreciative of music as she; but, at the same time, she never gave the slightest manifestation of enthusiasm. She would be so perfectly absorbed during the representation of an opera, that she would reply to no one, seeming not to notice any disturbance, but to have passed away into a realm of sound, from whence she could hold no communion with this prosaic sphere.

Like a living statue, she would remain immovable, the graceful *pose* of her figure undisturbed, her cheeks glowing with a roseate bloom, her eyes fairly emitting scintillating rays of light, and as far removed from the by-play of words and jests, in the actual every-day world immediately about her, as if she were already translated to the "heaven of music" of which Jean Paul tells us.

During the acts, she would still remain in a quiescent state, with a look of dreamy abstraction in her eyes; and at the conclusion, when there would be the usual bustle and confusion of people rising and doors slamming, she would slowly rise from her chair, like one in a dream, and shiver and sigh, as though she were shaken by a blast of cold and bitter wind, upon her return to the world of commonplace and reality.

And, strange to say, we could never induce her to say a single word upon the subject of the opera, although it was our custom to discuss each morning at the breakfast-table the performance of the preceding evening.

When she first came to us, we were in the habit of going every night to the opera; but seeing the deep and peculiar effect that it produced upon her, we were afraid that so much music might prove an injury to a brain so sensitive to its

influence, and therefore Dr. Hilton thoughtfully diversified the evening amusements. She was with us but a few weeks when she received a furious letter from my father, commanding her to return home immediately; for he was afraid that she would follow the example of her disobedient sister, and be seduced into marriage with an American; and adding that he would rather lay her in her grave than witness such a catastrophe. It was a fierce, cruel letter, and made me despair of my father's ever becoming reconciled to me; and I longed, with an indescribable hunger of the heart, for a few kind words from him. We yielded to the necessity of her departure with a very bad grace, and urged her to obtain, if possible, my father's consent to a renewal of her visit at an early day.

When bidding us good-bye, she said, laughingly, and in allusion to a promise, made in a joke by Dr. Hilton, to present to her *un bel amoriom*: "Remember, my dear brother, to regard my taste in your selection. I admire your style very much; but not gentlemen like Mr. Blackburn, who are adorned by nature with hair and beard of mixed orange and red." Then turning to me with a blush and a smile, she whispered: "Laure, I think M. Eugène a much handsomer gentleman than any I have met in Paris, except Dr. Hilton;" and, with a last kiss, she hastened away to the depot, accompanied by Dr. Hilton, leaving me in a state of perplexity, and puzzling over the possibility of a match between Elise and M. Eugène. I recalled the jesting allusion which I had made to the possibility of such an event in one of my interviews with my father; and, wondering at the strange turns that fortune will take, I sincerely rejoiced at the prospect of so much happiness for Elise, should my newly-entertained surmises prove correct, as I fervently prayed they might.

When Dr. Hilton returned, he expressed himself delighted with the pleasure which the visit of Elise had afforded him, and soothed away with many endearing words the fit of sadness and dejection into which I had fallen since she had left me. To divert and amuse me, he proposed that we should

take our supper that evening at the Hotel de France; and as I was nothing loth, we were soon on our way thither.

The supper-room at the hotel is a very fashionable place of resort; and beside the friends who were boarding there, we were always sure of meeting other acquaintances and friends, who would come there on an errand like our own, to while away the evening in the beautiful saloon, which was brilliant with mirrors, and gleaming with lights, and represented such a variety of the gay and happy aspects of life, that it was like viewing the representation of a wonderful play to witness it.

In the course of the evening I became deathly faint from the heated state of the rooms, and with my brain swimming, and darkness gathering over my eyes, I hastened out into the clear, cool air, and was immediately followed by Dr. Hilton, who brought my cloak and wrapped it about me. I was attacked with a violent shivering, coming on in paroxysms, which increased instead of becoming better, and consequently we hurried home. A blazing fire was already leaping and crackling in the grate; and, taking off my boots, my husband essayed to warm my feet by chafing them, and also held my hands in his own, but all to no purpose. I grew colder and colder, shaking violently, until, becoming alarmed, he placed me in bed, and went for a physician, who came at once. I had never been so ill before, and I thought I was going to die; and when they came into the room, I was weeping bitterly. Dr. Hilton said:

"My wife seems to be suffering from a very severe chill, doctor."

"Yes," he answered; "and evidently brought on by some nervous or mental excitement."

"Oh, doctor, am I going to die?" I asked, very dolefully.

He smiled, and reassured me, and sitting down by my side, asked me a few questions, and then conversed with Dr. Hilton on indifferent subjects. He wrote a prescription, and as he rose to leave he placed his hand lightly on my husband's shoulder, and said:

"Your wife will recover her usual health in a few months," and, bowing, left the room.

Dr. Hilton followed him, telling me that he would be back in a few minutes.

And now, my dear reader, as you have read thus far my simple story, and lingered over the comparatively trifling incidents of my life, you will, doubtless, proceed to the end; and the following scene will, perhaps, excite your wonder, and, if you sympathize with me, as I know you will, your anger also, when you become acquainted with the consequent record of my life.

Dr. Hilton returned almost immediately, and taking me in his arms with the most loving words, and tender embraces, placed me in the large arm-chair before the fire.

"Laure, my sweet Laure," he said; "I have taken you up, so that I can press you close against my heart. I want you to be glad with me, for I am so happy. You are no longer a child, *ma petite*, but a proud, happy woman, for you will shortly become a mother;" and he pressed me more closely against his heart. I could make no reply, my heart was too full. I laid my head back upon his shoulder and indulged in tears of joy and gladness. His manner was so kind and tender, so expressive of delight at the prospect before him, that I momentarily forgot the shadow that brooded over me.

And now, after the many years of trouble and sorrow that have been my miserable, wretched portion, I look back to that tender and loving scene, and almost wonder if it lives in my imagination alone, or if it actually happened — if it is, indeed, true, that the young and happy girl-wife whom I see in my visions of the past, tenderly cared for, and caressed by an adoring husband, is, in very truth, the same despairing woman, whose sad, grief-haunted eyes bend mournful glances upon me whenever I confront her reflection in the mirror. Oh, my God! my brain reels when I think of the terrible duplicity of man; but no, I cannot, I *will* not believe but that the husband of my youth was as sincere and true as truth itself; that it was only by the force of cruel circumstances that he was com-

pelled to do the bitter act which turned the sweet, blooming gardens of my life into a desert waste, where only one pale blossom strives to struggle into bloom. Dr. Hilton's nature was naturally weak, and he yielded to a will stronger and more indomitable than his own. But I will dwell no longer upon these sad reflections; rather let me linger as long as possible among the happy scenes that filled the few sunny days of peace and love that were still my own.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A PRESENT FROM ONE OF DR. HILTON'S INTIMATE FRIENDS.

A TRIFLING incident occurred just about this time, which I will relate, as I shall have cause to allude to it in a future chapter. I had done some little acts of kindness for Dr. Ross, such as repairing small rents in his coat, mending his gloves, &c.; and wishing, I suppose, to make me some suitable amends for the trifles I had performed, he sent me a beautiful basket, which was a most convenient affair. It had several compartments in it, and was fitted up as a work-box and dressing-case. I had never seen anything more complete or desirable in the way of a work-box, and as I needed one very much, I was charmed and delighted. I asked Dr. Hilton's permission to accept it, seeing an expression on his face that impelled me to do so, as otherwise I should not have deemed his acquiescence a necessary condition to the acceptance of so small a gift from so valued a friend as Dr. Ross. In a very constrained manner, and with a strange tone in his voice, he replied to my request:

"Take it, Laure; of course, take it. Take it, if you desire it;" and left the room.

I did not fully comprehend his manner, but I accepted the gift. That evening, we had made arrangements to attend a grand horticultural show. These exhibitions were often held in Paris, at the Royal Gardens, in the winter, and were very magnificent affairs. I was ready to go, and anticipating, with childish impatience, the slow movements of the time-piece on the mantel, when Dr. Hilton came in, and said:

"I am feeling so unwell, Laure, that we shall have to give up our proposed amusement this evening, and remain at home; and to compensate you in a small measure for your disappointment, *ma petite*, I have brought you this little basket. It is not so fine nor so costly as the one with which Dr. Ross presented you, but you will think more of it, and use it instead; will you not?"

I looked at it in great surprise; for it was a common, small round basket, without even a handle; but I now understood the feelings by which he was actuated, and replied, laughing as I did so: "Your gifts, Dr. Hilton, are certainly more highly prized than those of others. I shall find your little basket very convenient, I doubt not;" and I proceeded to put away my hat and mantle, which had been laid out in readiness for the visit to the Royal Gardens.

I did not laugh, however, the next time that he indulged in an ebullition of temper, which exhibitions now became more and more frequent; but, notwithstanding, our life was a very happy one. We went out very frequently, but our quiet evenings at home were the most pleasant, and were thoroughly enjoyed by both of us.

Sometimes, when Dr. Hilton would propose going to some place of amusement, I, thinking that it was his desire, would give a reluctant consent; whereupon, he would smile and say:

"I see you had rather remain at home, Laure. Good, so had I;" and we would pass the hours in pleasant chat, or in playing dominos.

This was a game of which my husband was passionately fond; and one evening, when I had been beaten in several games, I thought I would endeavor to win by foul means,

since fair play had failed to bring me success. So I drew several to which I had no right, or in other words, I cheated at play. When Dr. Hilton discovered it, he threw down the dominos in his hand, and said, angrily:

"Laure, this is my last game. I will never touch these dominos again."

"Oh, Dr. Hilton," I said coaxingly, "what? not play another game? oh, yes, you will — with *me!*"

"No, I never will; I swear I never will," he replied.

Now that word "swear" had an awful signification to me, and so I said no more; and feeling disappointed, began to wonder what other game we should substitute. But soon recovering my cheerfulness, I brought a book and asked Dr. Hilton to read to me.

It was a rare pleasure to me to hear my husband read aloud, for he possessed the fine accomplishment of reading well in an eminent degree, and his voice was both musical and sonorous. I took my needlework from my basket, and listened with delight to the pathetic beauty and touching sadness of Lamartine's "Jocelyn," until the hour of retiring drew near.

The next evening, after supper was over, I took my usual seat by his side, and said thoughtlessly:

"Come, let us play a game of dominos."

"Why, Laure, do you not remember what I said last night?" he gravely replied.

I could see that he desired to play, for now and then he would glance at the little table at which we usually played, and seemed restless and uneasy. All at once his face brightened, and taking the box of dominos, he brought them to me, and said:

"Laure, take this box and hide it or destroy it, so that I may never see it again;" and putting on his hat, he left the room. While I was still wondering at the cause of his abrupt departure, he re-entered the room with a new box of dominos, and said:

"Come, Laure, we will have our game now."

"But, Dr. Hilton, did you not swear off?" I asked, much amused.

"Yes," he answered, his eyes gleaming with mirth, "but it was with the old dominos. Now draw your number, and let us begin." I laughed and clapped my hands, and told him that he would make a better lawyer than doctor, for so cleverly getting out of difficulties. In the course of the evening Dr. Ross came in, and joined our game, which we kept up until a late hour. Dr. Ross had come, he said, to make an engagement with us for the next morning, to attend a *fête* at the Palais Royal, where the celebrated brass band at the Tuileries would "discourse sweet music." There was to be a fashionable promenade concert, and "the world and his wife" were to be there, Dr. Ross said; adding, with a merry glance at me, "You must look your best and your prettiest, Madame."

Which I gayly promised to do. The next morning, at the appointed hour, I was ready. I wore a perfectly new dress, of exquisite texture and color, that looked as fresh as the morning was lovely, and was beginning to be quite impatient, when Dr. Ross drove up to the door in a light, elegant turn-out; he was justly proud of his carriage and horses, for they were very beautiful, and Dr. Hilton and myself were deeply indebted to him, for he had placed them at my service. The gentlemen both professed themselves pleased with my appearance, and paid me many pretty compliments, and in high good-humor we started off.

The morning was lovely beyond description; the full, strong atmosphere seemed to exhilarate and impart vitality, as we inhaled its richness in long, deep breaths, on our delightful drive.

As we drove round the grand Esplanade, the delicious music now swelled, now softened as the swift breeze wafted the sweet sounds to our ears, and filled them with harmonious sounds, even as our eyes were filled with visions of beauty; as carriage after carriage rolled slowly by us, each containing its own burden of loveliness. The occupants were principally

ladies and children, and some of the latter reminded me of the painted cherubs of the old masters, with their sweet, grave faces and sunshiny curls. There were a few beautiful little canopies with cushioned seats, inviting the weary promenaders to rest for a little time; and as I wished to listen quietly, without the distraction of moving, to a beautiful operatic air the band were playing, I proposed to the gentlemen to alight and enter one of these inviting rose-colored bowers.

I had been seriously annoyed, during our drive, by a gentleman who had persistently kept pace with us, his curriole being nearly all the while abreast of our carriage, into which he gazed, looking directly into my face whenever he could. Dr. Ross and Dr. Hilton were the first to notice him, and their angry faces and exclamations first drew my attention to the stranger. They indulged in sarcastic allusions to the proverbially polite manner of the French people, and cited this gentleman's impertinent glances as an example, which somewhat irritated me, and I exclaimed: "I doubt very much whether that gentleman is a Frenchman. If he is, then he is an exception to the general rule; but I think, Dr. Ross, that you would find him to be one of your own countrymen, if you had an opportunity of discovering his nationality."

The gentlemen addressed both disclaimed vehemently the possibility of the individual under discussion being an American; and we then dropped the subject. After taking a few turns, we entered the canopy I have before mentioned, and soon after the stranger came in also. I could see that Dr. Hilton was working himself into a fury, and I heard him say to Dr. Ross in a low tone, "I will first insult that man, and then I will kill him;" and I grew faint with alarm. I leaned down toward him, and whispered:

"Oh, Dr. Hilton, please do not be so angry — you frighten me so. This gentleman is not aware that he is giving offence."

"If he dares to address you, Laure, I will spring upon him like a tiger," he replied, with a furious look.

I said soothingly, "Well, we will not notice him;" and drawing his attention away to a beautiful carriage that was

then passing, we seated ourselves, and remained undisturbed for some time, during which I gave myself up to the enjoyment of the charming scene, listening to the delicious music, and watching the gay crowd passing and repassing before us, when suddenly we heard a confused sound of voices shouting and cheering. Hats were thrown wildly up into the air as though their reckless owners did not care whether they returned to them or not; handkerchiefs were waved gayly; brilliantly caparisoned horses galloping by, clearing the way, carrying riders arrayed in gorgeous uniforms, and shouts of "*vive l'Empereur!*" "*vive l'Empereur!*" rent the air. I realized at once that the Emperor and Empress were about to pass, and sprang to my feet in time to see a beautiful open *calèche*, drawn by four splendid jet-black horses, that threw up their graceful heads and stepped as proudly as if they were conscious of the supreme honor conferred upon them in being chosen to convey swiftly over the ground the vehicle containing such an illustrious burden. In the *calèche* sat the charming Eugenie, with the Prince Imperial by her side, while the Emperor Napoleon sat opposite, with his hat in his hand, responding now and then with a graceful salutation to the enthusiastic cheers of the people.

The Empress looked like a fair, white lily, rising from clouds of mist; for she was completely enveloped, or, rather, sat in the midst of clouds of fleecy lace, with, here and there, an azure gleam.

The whole cavalcade passed very swiftly; and, as I turned to get back to my seat, I stumbled over a small stool, and nearly fell. Dr. Hilton and Dr. Ross were still gazing after the flying *cortège*, and the stranger, whom I had nearly forgotten, sprang forward, and seizing my arm, supported me, just in time to prevent my receiving a severe fall, saying, as he did so, very politely, but in very bad French:

"Allow me to assist you, mademoiselle."

He had barely uttered the words, when, like a flash of lightning, Dr. Hilton rushed in between us, and caught me up so violently, that I screamed with pain. I could not dis-

tinguish the impetuous words that fell from his lips, nor the deprecating answer of the stranger. In an excited tone, and with fearful rage depicted on every feature, Dr. Hilton exclaimed, "My knife!—where is my knife?" which alarmed me so that I fainted, which, in turn, alarmed my husband; and he left the astonished gentleman, whom he had fiercely colared, and flew to my assistance. All this happened in less time than I take to tell it; but it effectually put an end to our enjoyment for the day. The stranger, in the meantime, disappeared, and we entered our carriage, and returned home. Dr. Hilton was very silent, and seemed to be half ashamed of himself. Dr. Ross teased and rallied him unmercifully, and I laughed, and told him that the gentleman was not French, at any rate, for he spoke it too brokenly for that. At last, he said:

"Well, well, Laure, say no more about it, I beg of you. I will promise not to frighten you so cruelly another time."

Dr. Ross said, with a smile:

"Madame Hilton, you came to the rescue at the most opportune moment. If you had not fainted just as you did, it would have gone seriously with that poor fellow, who was evidently frightened almost to death; and then the astonishment of the gaping crowd, who could not imagine what was the matter, was ludicrous in the extreme. I can laugh over it now as a most ridiculous scene; but really, old fellow," turning to Dr. Hilton as he spoke, "you must learn to control that ungovernable temper of yours. You and I have too often ridiculed the French people for their excitable and impulsive temperament, to imitate them."

"Oh," said Dr. Hilton, "let us have no more of this, I beseech you. Do not allude to it again, for, I assure you, I feel rather sensitive about the matter."

Good humor being restored, we became as sociable and merry as before, and I insisted upon Dr. Ross's spending the evening with us.

When we reached home, I found a letter awaiting me from my dear Madame de Simencourd, who was passing the winter

in Italy. She told me that she was suffering with an incurable disease, and was coming home to die in her own dear France, and added:

"My darling child, you know not how often, when lying helpless on my bed, prostrated by pain and disease, I have longed for your soothing presence; I long for the tender, cooling touch of your soft hand upon my fevered and aching head. When I return to Paris, if the good God permits me to do so, can you not come to me?"

I wept long and bitterly over that sad letter, and, if it had been possible, would have flown to her at once; but, alas! it was not in my power thus to repay her for the many, many kindnesses she had showered upon me in my early days. I was utterly debarred from the dear privilege of nursing her, and waiting upon her, which would have been the only way in which I could have expressed to her my gratitude.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THREE DAYS BEFORE THE DEPARTURE.

A FEW days after this, in fact, the Monday following—can I ever forget it?—Dr. Hilton came into the room where I was sitting, busy with my needlework, and said:

"Laure, put on your bonnet and mantle, and go with me to St. Suplice. I have been looking for Dr. Ross all day, but can find him nowhere, and I think he has gone there. I am anxious to see him on particular business, and we will follow him thither."

I was soon ready, and glad of an excuse to get out into the warm, sunny air.

On our way, we met a gentleman, who accosted Dr. Hilton in an easy, friendly manner, and said:

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"I was just coming to see you, my dear fellow, to bid you adieu. I hear that you are going away on Thursday."

Dr. Hilton hastily arrested his words by a sign or suggestive motion of the hand, and in a confused manner introduced him to me as a Mr. Chapman.

A chilliness like that of death came over me as I responded to his respectful salutation; but with a terrible effort, I recovered myself, and turned away nonchalantly to look at some paintings placed in a shop-window for exhibition. Dr. Hilton looked somewhat relieved; and, inviting the gentleman to call upon him that evening, which he promised to do, we proceeded on our way. Words are powerless to describe the tide of grief and bitterness that swept over my heart, taking possession of its every chamber, and filling it with woe. For the last few weeks, Dr. Hilton's manner had been such that it had lured me into the belief that he had abandoned his intention of going to America; or, if he was obliged to go, that he would take me with him; for he sometimes spoke of the new world which would be open to me when I went with him to his native land. But now I learned, through the inadvertent speech of this stranger, that the time was close at hand when we were to be separated; and as yet he had said nothing to me. Could it be possible that he intended to leave me—me whom he so tenderly loved—without a word? I tried to reason away this unworthy thought, so unjust to him to whom I had committed the keeping of my young and impulsive heart. I tried to think that the separation would be but a short one—that the time would soon pass away, and then we would be re-united, never again to part. But I was so young and timid, I did not know how to care for myself; and so great was my childish ignorance with regard to my present situation, that my heart sank heavily, like a weight of lead within my breast.

The necessity of concealing my feelings obliged me to act with apparent unconcern, so I paused and admired the different articles of beauty in the windows of the elegant shops that we passed. We found Dr. Ross, as we had expected to



do, and he returned with us. It was nearly dark when we reached our apartments, and supper being soon announced, we gathered about the table; but I could only go through the form of eating.

Soon after, Mr. Chapman came in, as he had agreed. Dr. Hilton told me that this gentleman, Dr. Ross, and himself had some business-matters to converse upon, and added:

"You will excuse us, *ma petite*, if we speak in the English language, will you not?"

At first I was very restless, and busied myself in going about the room and re-arranging the ornaments on my *étagère* and mantel, and then I took my sewing and sat near them, where I could watch their faces. I could not understand a word of their discourse; but they were talking very earnestly, and I noticed, as I glanced furtively toward him, that Dr. Hilton never removed his eyes from my face; and Dr. Ross and Mr. Chapman looked so frequently toward me during the conversation, that I knew it was of me that they were talking. My husband looked sad and unhappy, and I knew, that, whatever feelings of misery and grief were in my heart, they were equalled by his evident unhappiness.

I knew he was filled with remorse and regret at leaving me alone, so young and ignorant. That was why he had sent for Elise, hoping that she would be with me; but my father's summons to her, causing her to return home so unexpectedly, had frustrated this kind plan.

I was determined that I would receive the announcement of his departure from no other lips save his own, and I could well ignore all suspicion or knowledge of the fact, until he should communicate it to me; and in order to show my perfect unconcern, as soon as our guests had retired, and we were left alone, I passed behind his chair, and closing his eyes with my hands, said, with a laugh, "You are my prisoner."

He removed my hands from his face, slowly, and without an effort to respond to my smile and foolish words.

I knew that the hour had come; I knew it by his grave, serious manner, and by the sad expression of his eyes.

I withdrew from the touch of his hand with an inward trembling, and went on with my preparations for the night with such a forced quiet, that I was completely exhausted; and when he said, at last, with an effort, "Come here, *ma petite* Laure," his voice startled me, although I was waiting for the words; I could restrain myself no longer, and I fell into his arms in a violent fit of weeping, and gasped, amid hysterical sobs, "Oh, I know it, I know it all!"

He pressed me convulsively to his breast, for he was speechless with anguish. At last he said:

"Laure, I have received some cruel letters from my father, of which I could not tell you. I could not bear to torture and distress your tender, sensitive heart with their unkindness and reproaches. He commands my instant return to America, and says that he will send me no more money, if I refuse to obey him. Some one has written to him about my marriage, and he is very, very angry. I cannot take you with me, *ma petite*, for I have not enough of money to enable me to do so, and besides, I am afraid that the voyage might hurt you in your present delicate health; but in three months, my darling, I will send for you, or return myself. I must leave on Thursday."

I could not speak, but paced up and down the room, folding my hands tightly together, while he threw himself across the bed, in silent despair. I did not go to him, although he called me several times; but when, at last, I sat down, unable longer to support myself upon my feet, he came to me and took me in his arms. His eyes were red, and full of tears. We sat thus for some time, without speaking, and then he said, in a tender, loving voice:

"Do not grieve, *ma petite*, it will not be long; I will soon send for you—only three months, they will soon pass away, and then we will never be parted again."

"Oh, my husband, what if I should die when I need you most, and you not here?" and then I burst into renewed weeping. "You may be drowned in crossing the terrible ocean, or—" and here a new thought, full of bitterness, struck



me—"you may forget me, when you get once more among the fair American women; you may love some one else, and never come back to me."

"Oh Laure, my poor child, now you talk like a foolish child indeed," he answered tenderly, and with sweet caresses. I still wept, un comforted, and he continued: "You are very childish, *ma petite*; but to quiet you, hear me swear by the heavens above, that I will never love another woman as long as you live. Heaven itself will fall, before I forget you, my own one, or wrong you, even in thought; only love me, and have confidence in me."

I could not answer, but I left him alone. I left the room, crossed to the portress's lodge, and rushed into her apartment almost frantic with grief. She was very kind to me, and bathed my face and hands with cologne, and seated me with solicitous care in a comfortable arm-chair near the fire. I did not tell her what my trouble was, but I begged her to leave me by myself for a little while; and after she left me, I knelt down and prayed to the Almighty God to give me strength to bear this separation, to preserve my husband, and bring him back to me, and to carry me safely through my impending peril, so that I might go to him if he did not return to me. When I arose from my knees I felt very sad, but strengthened to endure the trial, and to endeavor to be cheerful and hopeful through it all.

As I crossed the court, in returning to my room, I could see my husband through the window. I could see him wipe his eyes and his brow, and I knew that he was weeping. I entered; he held out his arms to me, and said:

"Come to me, Laure — come and comfort me, my darling — be firm and cheerful, and all will go well. Laure, hasten me off, so that I may return quickly, for the sooner I go the sooner shall I come back to you and to my little child."

I put my arms around his neck, drawing his head down, and, kissing him, I promised to be brave and cheerful for his sake; that I would not weep any more, but he must promise me that I should be with him until the last moment of his stay.

He then told me of all the arrangements that he had made for me. I was to be left under the care of Dr. Ross; and when I needed money or assistance of any kind, I was to apply to him. I was not to deprive myself of anything that I wanted. He had also instructed Dr. Ross to see that I had a good physician, and a nurse; "for," said he, seriously, "I do not wish you to nurse your child, Laure. I have engaged an excellent woman to perform this office for you; here is her address; send for her when you need her. And now, *ma petite*, I desire that you will make me a promise, and you must not think me exacting either. Dr. Ross will often invite you to go to some place of amusement; for he is very kind, and will wish to relieve the tedium of your solitude; but do not go, my darling, at least not often, for you are young and fond of gayety, and are not aware of the imprudence of going much abroad during the absence of your husband."

I could only reply, that I should have no desire to seek any amusements or pleasures which he could not share with me; besides, I should have much to occupy my time, which, I hoped, would prevent me from yielding to gloom and melancholy; "for," I added, "I am determined to keep myself bright and cheerful for your sake." We both felt much relieved by our long and confidential talk; but still I felt the cold hands of sorrow clutching wildly at my very heart-strings; and when, toward morning, I fell into a troubled sleep, my mind was full of vague forebodings, which I was too terror-stricken, too paralyzed by grief, to analyze.

## CHAPTER XX.

## THE LAST PROMENADE.

THE next morning, the day dawned as bright and lovely as though there were no aching hearts beneath its glow who would feel the sunshine and the glory more oppressive than the darkest clouds that could obscure the face of the heavens.

Dr. Hilton said to me, soon after breakfast, which usually pleasant meal had been a very silent one, the dishes having been removed with their contents almost untasted:

"Laure, *ma petite*, you look pale and exhausted. The day is mild and lovely, and I think that if you should spend it in the open air, it will benefit you very much. Come, *m'amie*."

I hesitated. I felt too entirely heart-broken to confront the bold, searching sunshine, and would rather remain at home. He continued:

"Don your prettiest dress, my darling, and we will go to the 'Garden of Wonders,' where you will enjoy the clear, pure air, and will hear some delicious music."

I still demurred. I did not want to hear the music, which would break in upon my grief with loud, unsympathizing tones. I felt that

"In all this warm, wide earth, I had no part."

The lightest song would have overcome me like a dirge; but when Dr. Hilton added, in those sweet, caressing tones that always won their way to my heart at once: "It is the last time, Laure, for many days, that we can seek enjoyment together. Go with me; will you not?"

I refused no longer, but hastened to make my toilette for the day.

After we had started, Dr. Hilton said:

"Now good-bye to grief and foreboding for to-day. You will have time enough for that when I am not with you to

kiss away your tears. Let us enjoy this day to the utmost, as if it were to be the last that should be given to us."

My assumed cheerfulness almost gave way at these words; but I made no answer, and my heart gradually grew lighter under the combined influences of the beautiful day and the genial, tender happiness of my husband's manner, who seemed determined to forget, for the present, the sorrow that surely waited for us but a little way on the dark future.

The "Garden of Wonders" is so called because, at every step, a beautiful statue or lovely grotto (skillfully concealed by the trees and shrubbery, until you come suddenly upon them) challenges your admiration.

After entering its precincts, an enticingly green, shady wood, filled with dark, deep shadows, was the first thing that attracted me, and invited me into its depths.

Dr. Hilton held me back, and, with a mysterious look upon his face, held up a warning finger, and said:

"Beware, Laure! This is the fatal labyrinth, wherein so many have lost their lives. If you once enter into its dismal recesses, who shall say whether you will ever come back?"

The warning voice and uplifted finger were ludicrous exaggerations, that forced me to laugh in spite of myself, and I replied:

"Oh, I love to unravel mysteries," and sprang forward into the one of the two paths which led to the right. Dr. Hilton followed, saying:

"It is just as I expected. I knew you would do this, Laure. A woman's curiosity leads her anywhere."

I turned to him quickly:

"Were you ever here before, Dr. Hilton—here, in this labyrinth?"

"Yes," he replied.

"Ah!" I retorted. "As men have no curiosity, what motive, pray, induced you to enter this fatal place?"

"Oh, it looked so charming, that I could not resist!" he answered, smiling.

The shrubbery grew denser, and the shade deeper, as we

traversed the numerous paths that crossed and re-crossed each other, leading farther into its depths. Dr. Hilton would draw closer to me, and, pretending to be afraid, whispered, in low, dismal tones, some ghostly story of the hobgoblins and mischievous spirits that were said to infest the place; and once, when I laughed, he said:

"There, Laure, is a ghost in very truth, come, I have no doubt, to punish you for your untimely mirth."

And following with my eyes the direction pointed out by his lifted finger, I saw a white, ghostly figure, toward which we were approaching, and which vanished completely, even as I gazed upon it. I was really startled, but I could feel no lasting fear while my husband was beside me; so we pressed on toward the spot where we had seen the apparition, and found our white-robed ghost to be a very substantial one indeed; being only a most superb statue of marble.

We had lost sight of it several times in the curious windings of the path, which had caused it to seem to disappear. It was standing before a beautiful little grotto appropriately named "The Sibyl's Cave."

While we were examining the interior of this grotto, and admiring the lovely faces and graceful attitudes of the statues within it, Dr. Hilton said, abruptly,

"Laure, did you ever have your fortune told?"

The question brought up a host of reminiscences. I thought of the wonderful clairvoyant, Madame Bonbon, whom we had consulted in Orleans on that merry day so long ago, who had told me of the fearful things which were yet to happen me. I was startled, for in that moment I recognized the accuracy of some at least of her statements, for up to the present moment everything had transpired as she had foretold. I remembered, too, that she had said that my husband would abandon me shortly after our marriage. All these thoughts passed rapidly through my mind while Dr. Hilton stood, awaiting my reply to his question. I looked at him, as he regarded me so attentively. "Can it be possible?" I said; and then I hated myself for entertaining the doubt so derogatory to him; and

mentally saying, "I cannot—I will not believe that one so noble, so kind, so good, can ever become so treacherous and base;" and shaking off the unwelcome thought, I looked up with a smile, and said:

"Do you believe, Dr. Hilton, that fortune-tellers can predict truth, or can really foretell events?"

"No," he replied, in a careless manner, and with a light laugh; and then added in a more serious tone:

"No mortal can raise the dark veil that lies between us and the future, and see what lies hidden there; that power rests alone with God, maker of heaven and earth." I said no more upon the subject, although I had been strongly tempted to relate to him my experience, but the solemn earnestness of his reply forbade me.

After a short silence, an unaccountable chill and dread came over me, and I said:

"Come, Dr. Hilton, I am tired of staying in this retreat; it is so cold; let us get into the right path, and go back into the sunlight again."

"What, Laure, tired already? Why, you have not seen half the wonders of this curious place;" and he proceeded to enumerate them, thinking to entice me into penetrating farther into its dim recesses; but I only shook my head; so, taking me by the hand, he led me into the grotto, and through a door in the back nearly concealed by ivy and other clinging vines, which opened upon a pleasant path, that, after several windings, brought us to an opening where the sunlight lay bright and warm upon the grass.

After resting awhile upon one of the seats, placed there for the convenience of visitors, and looking at the gay, laughing people that strolled slowly along, we proceeded to another part of the garden. Beautiful flowers, and rare, luxuriant plants, artificial lakes, and superb statues, representing different divinities of the old mythological times, met our eye at every turn, and it was with a long, lingering, backward glance that we left the lovely spot, toward the twilight hour, and sought our home. That evening, while we were conversing as usual, Dr. Hilton said:

"Laure, *ma petite*, I must have your photograph before I go. Will you go with me to-morrow morning, and sit for one for me?"

I assented with a nod. I could not speak, for I had a choking in my throat that prevented speech. This was to be our last day together; and when it dawned, its light fell like fire upon my burning eyes, which sleep had not visited during the night.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE RING.

WE went to the artist's immediately after breakfast. I remember that I wore, at my husband's desire, a very pretty black silk *peignoir*. As we entered the gallery, my husband said:

"Do not look so sad, *ma petite*. I want this likeness of you to be as cheerful and bright as your own dear self. That sad, weary look is foreign to your face and your nature."

I called a smile to my lips and eyes, and the result of the sitting was an excellent likeness—as faithful as a pictured representation could be. Dr. Hilton also gave me a beautiful miniature portrait of himself, which delighted me more than any other gift could possibly have done.

When we had returned home, I said to him:

"My husband, you have given me a present; well, I have prepared one for you also."

"What is it, *ma petite*?" he asked.

I handed him a small box, and took therefrom a beautiful ring, made of my hair, woven in an intricate manner between bands of gold, with two gold hands clasped together over it, with his name engraved beneath. He looked much pleased, and, stooping down, kissed me gravely, and said: "This ring, my darling, shall never leave my finger." In a moment, he added: "Laure, it is now time for me to pack my trunk."

I burst into tears.

"Oh, my husband! this is the last, last night that we can be together. Oh! I cannot part with you. I know I shall be ill. Oh! take me with you—take your little wife with you."

He pressed me in his arms and wept with me.

"Oh, Laure, Laure, do not grieve so! Did you not promise? Do you want to kill me? Have courage, my darling."

But it was some time before I became calm. Had I not been struggling to be silent ever since I had known of this terrible parting, and was not my heart as heavy as lead with its burden of repressed grief?

How hard, then, was it for me to control my grief. I felt a sad presentiment, I could not tell why; but I felt that I never would see him again, and I gave myself up unrestrainedly to grief, and wept long and freely. After I became once more composed, I withdrew from his arms, and sat down on the sofa, and watched him as he proceeded to pack his trunk.

His preparations were soon finished, and then he came and sat by me, and said, (how every word he uttered, however trifling, still lingers in my memory:)

"Laure, how could you tell me that I would forget you? How could you doubt me for one moment, and deem me such a monster? I would rather die a thousand deaths, if that were possible, than cause you a moment's agony, sweet one; and do you not know that doubt of the one you love causes the keenest anguish? You must have confidence in me, my sweet wife."

"Yes, Dr. Hilton," I replied, laying my head upon his shoulder, "I will have confidence in you, I will never doubt you, I was only in jest; why, if I did not believe implicitly in you, I should die at your feet, before you left me."

He was to start at eight o'clock the next morning, and, after our early breakfast was over, he went out for a few moments, leaving me alone. My courage again gave way, and

I threw myself on the bed, and cried out in my anguish: Oh, why could I not tranquillize myself? why could I not shake off that miserable foreboding that made my heart so heavy? If the great and good God would preserve him during the voyage, and bring him back to me, how thankful and grateful I would be all my life; and throwing myself upon my knees, I offered up a prayer to Him who hears His children when they cry to Him from the depths of sorrow and despair.

I was just rising from my lowly attitude, and wiping the tears of my grief from my face, when my husband returned.

"Oh, my Laure," he said, encircling me in his arms, "we must go now; remember your promise, do not grieve, nor make it harder for me to bear."

And then suddenly he cried, in a tone of alarm, holding up his hand, "Why, where is my ring?"

We searched everywhere for it. Dr. Hilton thought that he had left it on the mantel when he bathed his hands in the morning; but it was not there. Time passed, and he could wait no longer, and so we gave up the search, I promising to send it to him in my first letter, if I found it after his departure.

The carriage waited, and on going down to it, we found Dr. Ross already seated within it, and waiting for us. Silently we entered it, and in silence remained all the way to the depot. We entered the waiting-room for a moment, and laying my head upon his arm, I said: "My husband, three months is so long to wait, how can I endure it?" He pressed me again and again to his heart, and his last words were:

"Laure, *ma petite*, keep up good courage, love me, have confidence in me, take good care of yourself for my sake. As truly as there is a Heaven above us, I will come back to you, or send for you, in three months, if I am still alive; good-bye, good-bye, my own precious wife;" and he was gone. He stood upon the platform of the slowly-moving car as the train moved lazily out of the depot, and I watched him until my sight grew dim, and I could see no more. Dr. Ross bore me to the

carriage, and I threw myself down upon the seat, and gave myself up to utter despair.

Dr. Ross tried to soothe and comfort me, and gently chide me for my unreasonable grief. I tried to calm myself, and assured him that I should not be so childish after a few days.

When I re-entered my desolate room, oh, how lonely, how deserted it seemed! Evidences of the presence of my lost love were still there; a linen coat which he had forgotten, a half-worn glove, and a withering flower, bruised and broken, (like my poor heart,) which I had seen in his button-hole only that morning. I picked it up, and held it closely and tenderly in my hand. Alas! he was gone—I was left alone! All that day I wandered about wretched and lonely, and the night was still more terrible than the day. I prayed for sleep, but even her blessed comfort was denied me, and the morning found me positively ill with grief. At daybreak, Marie, my maid, came in with a cup of strong coffee, which I drank. She bathed my aching head, darkened the room, and left me. I fell into a light, uneasy slumber, which lasted, however, until ten o'clock, when I awoke, only slightly refreshed. Still I felt better able to endure, and cope with all that might be before me. I felt that I must no longer be as childish as heretofore, with a kind, indulgent husband to depend upon. I must think and act for myself. I was very young, and with but little judgment or calculation, but I must not succumb. I must manage in such a manner as to win warm praises from him, and justly earned commendations, when he returned. Under these thoughts my spirits grew more buoyant, and I kept repeating to myself the words of an English song, which Dr. Hilton had translated for me, and with which I had grown familiar from frequently singing it:

"Come back from your long, long roving,  
On the sea so wild and rough,  
Come back to me, tender and loving,  
And I shall be blessed enough.

"Where your sails have been unfurling,  
What winds have blown on your brow,  
I know not, and ask not, my darling,  
So that you come to me now.

"Of men though you be unforgiven,  
Though priest be unable to shrive,  
I'll pray till I weary all heaven,  
If only you'll come back alive!"

## CHAPTER XXII.

## RETIREMENT.

ALMOST from the very hour of Dr. Hilton's departure, I began to look for his return; and I also began at once to get myself in readiness to go to him at a moment's notice, should he find himself compelled to send for me, instead of coming for me. How childish I was! my feverish anxiety caused me to imagine that time, keeping pace with my wishes, would pass so quickly away, that the three months of our separation would be gone before I had accomplished all that was necessary for me to do. Dr. Ross came often to inquire after my health, and to talk to me about the one subject nearest and dearest to me. I secluded myself entirely from society, going out only to church. I took a severe cold, in going one evening to St. Suplice, and, thinking nothing of it, I neglected taking the simple remedies which would have doubtless relieved me, and I became seriously ill. Dr. Ross pronounced my disease pneumonia, and sent for Madame Dupuis, the nurse engaged by Dr. Hilton, to come and take care of me. I was very ill for some days, but began slowly to improve at last, but found that I had entirely lost my voice. I could not speak aloud, and it was difficult to communicate my wishes to those in attendance upon me, even in a whisper. I was now looking hourly for a

letter from my husband, and I thought each hour that the next would surely bring it. One day, I was lying very still, and sadly thinking of my loneliness and desolation, when a street-singer paused under my window, and sang in sweet, clear strains, accompanied by a child's shrill treble, *La Normandie*. I covered my face with my hands, and wept silently and bitterly; for the words and melody of the beautiful song brought to my mind blessed memories of that happy hour when I heard the first words of love from the lips of my beloved husband, and when, in response to them, I surrendered myself and my happiness into his close keeping.

At this moment Dr. Ross was announced, and came in, saying:

"Good news, Madame, good news," holding up a letter for me. I joyfully extended my hands for it, and he gave it to me, telling me that he had also received one himself, which he had not yet opened, but which he would bring to me that evening; and with a kind "good-bye" he left me to the perusal of my letter, my precious letter. I tore it open with hands that trembled for very joy, and read:

LONDON, — 20, 18—.

"MY DEAR LITTLE LAURE:—I am on the eve of my departure for America. To-morrow morning at nine o'clock I shall be on the ocean. I have thought of you constantly, my darling, since I left you, and I know that you are also giving yourself much anxiety concerning me; so, although pressed for time, I write this little letter to reassure you, and tell you that I am in perfect health, and think only of you. Be prudent, *ma petite*, and rely upon the judgment of Dr. Ross rather than your own. Go to him for counsel and advice. Adieu—I imagine that you are with me, and I embrace you a thousand times.

Your devoted husband,

"J. HILTON."

I was, without doubt, the happiest woman in the world. I felt strong and well at once, and desired to rise immediately, but Madame Dupuis positively forbade my doing so, and I was forced to remain quiet. I will here mention that I did not

recover my voice for several weeks, and I felt all the time as if under some strange mysterious influence; for it was a distressing feeling not to be able to express, even in a whisper, the least wish or desire. I was much alarmed concerning it, but Dr. Ross reassured me.

The same evening that I received the letter from Dr. Hilton, Dr. Ross came to read to me the one which he had received at the same time. In it my husband enjoined upon him to "take good care of his Laure," and enclosed for me three hundred francs.

While convalescing, Dr. Ross was unremitting in his attentions to me. His kindness I can never forget; for, both then and afterward, he proved himself to be a true-hearted gentleman, and a firm, good friend. His kind face and imposing figure seem to come before me now, while writing these words. He was a large, portly man, with a straight, well-built, well-knit figure, and with a cheerful face, that expressed a welcome in every line. His manners were frank and impulsive, and there was a careless and engaging manner about him, which won for him a host of friends.

One day, I was well able to sit up, but had not yet been out-of-doors. Unable to talk, and having been forbidden to read, my thoughts dwelt, as usual, upon my absent husband, and, yielding to sad forebodings with regard to his safe transit across the ocean, I was foolishly weeping over the dreadful scenes my imagination had pictured before me, when Monsieur and Madame L'apèse were announced.

"What," said she, coming forward, "still grieving for *le chér* husband? Why, he is safe in America, no doubt, by this time, and you will soon hear from him. Why, my child, three months is not an eternity. It will soon pass: and, in the meantime, you have something more important to do than to sit here crying. Come! it is a sunny day. Come and take a walk with us. We will do all the talking, and you can do a little of the walking. We will go toward the Champs Elysées."

Without much hesitation, I accepted the kind invitation of

Madame, and I really felt revived and refreshed by the play of the soft, cool air upon my face and heavy eyes.

We sat down to rest under a magnificent elm-tree, and M. L'apèse gladdened my heart by talking of Dr. Hilton, telling several amusing anecdotes about him; "and," added he, pointing to one of the wide, gravelled walks,—one of many which cross and intersect each other in this lovely and extensive wood,— "that is the very spot on which he first told my wife of his intention to go to America, and of his great anxiety with regard to you, and urging her to go often to see you in his absence, and cheer you in your loneliness,— a duty which she will very gladly fulfil."

I felt much better after my walk. Not only was my body invigorated, but my mind was cheered and strengthened. Dr. Ross scolded me a little when he made his usual evening visit, for he feared that I had been imprudent, and taken an undue amount of exercise; but I improved rapidly from that hour, and soon regained my accustomed health.

Six weeks had now passed away since my husband's departure, and one morning I received the following letter from my mother:

"MA CHÈRE FILLE:—Your father is very anxious to see you, and not only you, but your husband. Can you come to us? Your brother François writes from Algeria that he will soon be here, and I am looking forward, with joy and impatience, to the happy hour when I shall see my children reunited and happy, assembled once more beneath the roof of their childhood's home. Do come, my daughter! It is a happy thought to me, and I know it will be to you, to know that your father desires nothing more than a reconciliation with your husband and yourself.

"*Votre mère,*

"APAULINE LENOIR."

My heart bounded with joy and gratitude at this blessed news; and I was the more impatient for my husband's return that we might go together and seek the blessing of my dear father, which had been so long withheld from us;

but I did not for one moment entertain the idea of going home without him, and it was with a feeling of sadness at the disappointment which I knew that it would convey, that I wrote the following answer:

"MY OWN DEAR MOTHER:—With what joy, with what exquisite happiness your precious letter was received, I cannot tell you; but it was alloyed only by the thought that I could not respond to it in person, as my heart prompted me to do. My husband has gone to America, and will be absent for some weeks to come, but as soon as he returns, we will hasten to you. In the meantime, will not my father consent for you to come to me, for a short time? My health is very delicate, for I am looking forward to a time, near at hand, when, in pressing my own little child in my arms, I can the better understand and appreciate all the loving care and affection which you bestowed upon me for so many years. Pray for me, my dear mother, and say to my father, that I am grateful to him for his kind wishes toward me, and I thank the good God who has put into his heart returning love and full forgiveness for  
YOUR OWN LITTLE LAURE."

I now determined that I would break up housekeeping, and board with Madame Dupuis, who had some very pleasant apartments to rent. Dr. Ross advised me to sell all my furniture; and, consequently, I disposed of it very advantageously to some of the occupants of the house. I broke a large and costly mirror, while the things were being removed from the room, whereat the *portiere* cried out in consternation, "Oh, Madame, Madame! *quel malheur!* you will have bad luck for seven years!"

I laughed, and said: "The only bad luck that can affect me, will be to hear of my husband's death. I fear no other misfortune; nothing can make me unhappy so long as he is spared to me!"

In taking up the carpet in my room, I found the ring, over the loss of which Dr. Hilton had lamented so much. I held it up triumphantly, and cried to the *portiere*:

"Oh, it is good luck I shall have, instead of bad luck, for

I have found my ring!" It made me sad to part with all the pretty things which my husband had purchased for me in those happy days that now seemed so long ago; but Dr. Ross and other friends persuaded me that it was for the best. I removed to the hotel of Madame Dupuis, who gave me a beautiful apartment on the second floor, where I spent many charming days in preparing the wardrobe of my baby.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### A DISAPPOINTMENT.

AT my earnest request, my sister Elise came to me, to remain with me until after my expected illness.

The three months had already passed away, and still my husband came not, neither did I hear from him; but I kept up my courage, hoping that, as he knew I could not travel at present, he thought it best to wait until I was safely over my *accouchement*. Still, I wished often, and longed hungrily for a letter.

I wrote to my sister Elise to come and stay with me for a while; and she soon came to me, cheering my loneliness with her sunshiny presence, until she won my mind away from the contemplation of its trouble. On the 12th of August, my little daughter was born; and the prayer which I offered up to God in thankfulness for so precious a gift, also invoked blessings on the head of her absent father.

When she was old enough to receive the sacred rite of baptism, Dr. Ross (who was to be her godfather) and Elise took her to St. Sulpice to be baptized. But Dr. Ross was a Protestant, and consequently was obliged to reply in the negative when asked by the officiating priest if he was a Catholic; whereupon the good father refused to proceed with the ceremony, and they were obliged to return home with the



little one still unbaptized. The next day, however, they carried her to Notre Dame, and succeeded in accomplishing their important object, Elise standing godmother. My baby received the name of Josephine, (the nearest approach to her father's name of Joseph that could be made,) which was soon corrupted to Fifine, by which pet name I shall continue to call her. She received an elegant present from her godfather of a magnificent wardrobe, containing a dozen of each article that a baby needed, resplendent with lace and embroidery, and also a pair of tiny diamond ear-rings.

The *nourrice* engaged for my child resided at Calais, and was sent for at once. I did not wish to surrender my little one to the care of a stranger; but it was her father's will, and I was obliged to submit. After a few days, the nurse returned to Calais, bearing my little Fifine with her. I grieved so for the comfort, which the pressure of the baby lips and the clinging of the baby hands had unconsciously given me, that I became very ill, and for several days was not cognizant of what was passing around me. Elise nursed me tenderly, and in a few weeks I began slowly to recover; but my recovery was much retarded by my anxiety about Dr. Hilton, from whom I had not heard for so long a time. I began to look hourly for his return, and every time that the bell rang it would plunge me into a state of excitement, the reaction from which was exhausting in the extreme.

At last, Dr. Ross received a letter from Dr. Hilton, which contained the following message for me, which Dr. Ross translated (it was written in the English language) and sent to me:

"Tell Laure it is impossible for me to come for her at present; indeed, I do not expect to be able to do so at all; but I shall send for her to come to me as soon as I can command the means for doing so."

Then followed some phrases of endearment, precious to me, but unimportant to the reader.

I dropped the note from my hand, and fell back upon my

pillow speechless with disappointment. I was rejoiced and relieved to know of his health and safety; but oh! I longed to see him so. Alas! that we should be separated because of the want of a little of that shining dross which so many possessed in abundance and valued so little. From one conclusion to another, my mind darted with rapidity. "He is poor; it is hard for him to obtain the money to send for me; his father is cruel, and refuses it to him. I have money enough, from the sale of my furniture, to enable me to go to him. I will write to him immediately. What a delightful surprise it will be to him. I must leave at once, while I have the means to go, and not exhaust my small fund in waiting. I will see Dr. Ross, and ask his advice."

All these thoughts coursed swiftly through my excited brain, gaining strength in their flight. I forgot everything—child, parents, brothers, and sister—everything but the thought of rejoining my husband; and to fulfil this hope, I speedily resolved to overcome all obstacles. With my resolution already formed, I sent for Dr. Ross, fully expecting to encounter opposition from him. He was much surprised at first, and said it would be a great undertaking for one so young and unexperienced; but when I explained to him Dr. Hilton's situation—his poverty and entire dependence upon his father, and that my money would be, perhaps, expended before he could send for me—he at once coincided with my views, and gave me the benefit of his kind advice and encouragement. After some lengthy conversation, he asked:

"And what about your little child, Madame?"

I answered, with surprise: "Of course, she goes with me."

Dr. Ross shook his head and looked grave. "Impossible, Madame, impossible. What! take a frail, delicate infant like her across the ocean! She would die!"

"Oh! what shall I do?" I cried, bursting into tears, and almost dismayed by this first serious obstacle that stretched across my path. Dr. Ross answered kindly:

"Do not be discouraged, Madame. You can leave your child with the *nourrice*. She will be well taken care of. I

shall remain in Paris for another year, and I promise you that my little godchild shall want for nothing; and remember, Madame;" and he looked compassionately upon me, with an earnest pressure of the hand, "if, upon reaching America, you should be disappointed in any of your hopes and expectations, remember that you have a firm and true friend in me. Write to me at once. Do not feel uneasy or unhappy about your babe, I repeat; I will be a father to her. And now, one question, Madame. Have you Dr. Hilton's address?"

"Oh, yes," I answered, giving him the one which my husband gave me just before leaving, and which was "New Orleans, La." I noticed that he regarded it with a doubtful and troubled look. He said nothing, but gave me a paper upon which he wrote "Yazoo City, Miss.," and told me to be careful and not lose it, for that it was the address of Dr. Hilton's father.

I assured him that the words would remain indelibly imprinted upon my heart, even if I should lose the paper. But he said:

"Do not trust to your memory, Madame. You are so ignorant of the language of my country that you can be easily misled."

I thanked him with a full heart for his kindness and good advice; but he hastily arrested my words, and said, hesitatingly, "I do not know whether I deserve thanks. I fear I am not giving you the best advice. I have been on the eve several times, Madame, of telling you something; but when I looked in your innocent, girlish face, and saw the firm, trusting confidence expressed therein, my courage gave way, and the words I would have uttered remained unsaid."

"Oh, tell me, Dr. Ross, tell me," I cried, beseechingly; "tell me, for God's sake, I entreat you," I pleaded, for I felt alarmed at the pitying look in his eyes,—"is Dr. Hilton—is my child ill or dead?"

"Oh, no, my poor child; no, not that. They are both alive and well, for all the knowledge I possess to the contrary."

He hesitated, walked to the window, and looked out. I heard him mutter, "I will not tell her; no, no, I cannot;" and then coming back to me with a smile upon his face, which I well knew was only assumed, he said:

"I can not tell you now, Madame; I feel that it is not best. But when you reach America, you will write often to me, to know of the welfare of your child. Well, then I shall tell you, if it is necessary."

I was dissatisfied; but I felt that it would be useless to try and persuade him to reveal to me the cause of the evident disturbance in his mind; and after some further conversation regarding my plans, during which I cautioned him not to reveal the secret of my intended journey to Elise, he bade me adieu. During the remainder of the visit of my sister I secretly went on with my preparations for my departure, and succeeded so well in managing everything to my satisfaction, that I had only to secure my passport and pack my trunks in order to make my departure simultaneous with her own; and she left me in total ignorance of my design.

I went to Calais to see my child—my precious Fifine. It almost broke my heart to part with her; but I was gratified and delighted to see how strong and vigorous the little frail infant, I had sent from me only a few weeks before, had become. I pressed her to my bosom again and again; and giving her a last kiss, with which I breathed a prayer also, I returned to Paris with a heart full of fears and forebodings, which the thought of the sacred duty I deemed it incumbent on me to perform could not dispel.

The next morning I sent for Dr. Ross to accompany me to the Bureau to assist me in obtaining my passport. He was not at home; and so great was my impatience and haste to get away that I went to the Bureau alone. The gentleman to whom I applied asked me, according to the rules, "How old are you, Mademoiselle?"

"I am a married woman, Monsieur," I replied.

He then said, incredulously, but in as polite a manner as his words would admit, "You look very young, Madame;

but it is against our rules to deliver a passport unless the applicant is accompanied by some one to act as an indorser. If you will return, accompanied by your parents, a friend, or," and here he smiled, "your husband, you shall receive your passport."

I thanked him, blushing at my precipitation, and left the office, thinking that I would have to wait until Dr. Ross returned; for I did not dare to apply to any one else, for fear that my father would learn of my doing so, and forbid my going. As I was making my way, despondingly, through the crowded thoroughfare, a thought suddenly entered my mind, and I conceived a plan which I proceeded at once to execute. I had a friend—an acquaintance rather—Madame Menard, who, I had been informed by a mutual friend, was expecting to go to America very soon to join her husband, who had, or would, precede her.

I immediately retraced my steps and sought her apartment, and solicited her assistance.

Madame Menard was a tall, finely formed, handsome woman, of noble parentage, but who had married beneath her station. She received me very pleasantly, and cordially promised to chaperone me during the voyage, and assist me out of my present difficulties. She informed me that her husband had already gone to London, where she was to join him in a few days; and added very kindly: "So you see, my child, you are more fortunate than you supposed;" and donning her bonnet, we proceeded at once to the Bureau.

The agent smiled at my return, and Madame Menard at once accosted him:

"Monsieur, I know this lady—she is of age," (this was a falsehood, but it was our last resort,) "her husband is in America, and she is desirous of joining him." This was quite satisfactory to the agent, and he at once gave me the longed-for passport; but my troubles were not yet ended. Dr. Ross was taken suddenly ill, and I had to depend entirely upon the brother of Madame Menard to make the necessary final arrangements for me. Dr. Ross sent for me to bid me good-bye,

and repeated his kind advice, bidding me be of good heart, and encouraging me with assurances that my child should be well cared for.

My eyes are blinded with tears as I write of this faithful friend, whose wise and good advice no longer cheers me, and whose kindly beaming eyes I shall never more behold.

I must not forget to mention that I had written to Dr. Hilton, announcing my coming.

My sister Elise, by some means, had become aware of my intended departure, and making some excuse to my mother—(my father being absent)—returned at once to Paris, accompanied by M. Eugène. At another time I should have felt embarrassed at meeting him, but the exigency of circumstances engrossed my thoughts so completely that I was in no wise disconcerted when I shook hands with him.

I inquired at once of Elise if my father knew that I was going to America, and was much relieved at her negative reply.

M. Eugène and Elise were both very kind to me, and accompanied Madame Menard and myself to the depot on the morning of our departure. After I was seated in the cars, loving thoughts of my father and mother, and of my child, rushed over me, and a sudden sense of my ingratitude filled my heart. I wept silently. M. Eugène pressed my hand kindly, and whispered: "Courage, Madame, courage." The last good-bye was spoken, and turning resolutely from my sad reflections, my heart burst forth into joyful expectations, picturing, with loving exaggeration, the future in bright and radiant colors, which were afterwards washed out one by one with bitter, bitter tears.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## THE DISFIGURED FACE.

THE transition from the sublime to the ridiculous, or from the affecting to the ludicrous, is not only sudden, but common; I therefore may be pardoned for mentioning an incident which occurred to us while on the cars. An Englishman of very unprepossessing *personnel*, having a very florid complexion, and huge red whiskers, took a seat near us, and, probably thinking that when two ladies were travelling alone and unprotected, they would, doubtless, be grateful for any attention or politeness, endeavored to make himself agreeable to us, or, as much so as the circumstances would permit, for we neither understood nor spoke a word of English, and our acquaintance was equally ignorant of French. He, however, took a great deal of trouble in pointing out to us the different places of note along the route, with a great effort at gesticulation, which brought the perspiration out upon his forehead in great drops, while his face, in its flaming frame of hair and whiskers, glowed more ardently than before. He would shout in our ears the most unintelligible sounds, at which we would politely smile, and nod, as if fully comprehending them.

On one route were several covered bridges and tunnels, and while passing through the latter we were enveloped in complete darkness. During our transit through one of these, while trembling with fear of the thick, palpable darkness, I felt myself suddenly encircled, and a pair of strong, rough whiskers pressed against my cheek. I was too startled to cry out. After a moment's thought, I concluded not to betray, by the least sign, that I resented the insult. I quietly informed Madame Menard of what had taken place, speaking to her without any excitement in my manner or voice, and as carelessly and indifferently as if telling her of some every-day occurrence, and at the same time offering her a cake from my

reticule, which she accepted, while she replied in an amusingly nonchalant manner, which she assumed perfectly, for she was furious with indignation. We arranged a little plan, and waited—our Englishman, in the meantime, evidently thinking that he had made himself vastly agreeable. On entering the next tunnel, which was also the last upon our route, by a speedy change in our positions, Madame Menard became the recipient of the whiskered embrace. She returned it with all her strength by a blow from her doubled-up fist, which was as firm and hard as a man's, hitting him full in the face. When we emerged again into the light, our Englishman sat with his face, from which the blood was trickling down, turned toward the window, never turning from it but once, and then only to glance at my hand, as if wondering at its strength. Poor fellow, he left the cars at the next stopping-place.

We were several hours in crossing La Manche. The sea was very rough, and while sitting on deck, an old, gray-haired gentleman in an undress uniform accosted us politely, and, glancing at me, said to Madame Menard:

"That little one, with her rosy cheeks, will be looking quite pale presently. She will be the first to feel the effects of sea-sickness.

He laughed merrily as he spoke, but, before the smile had gone away from his pleasant face, he rushed suddenly to the side of the vessel, and gave audible proofs that he had been the first to succumb. He bore very good-naturedly the laughter in which I indulged at his expense. My hour of suffering came, however, and I found myself, almost before I was aware, in the clutches of the demon of sea-sickness. Under its dire influence, I almost lost heart and courage; but hope soon fanned me well with her light wings, and when we left the steamer, I was again in perfect and jubilant health. We took the cars for London, which city we entered at the hour of noon, and proceeded at once to the Clarendon Hotel.

The next morning, while Madame Menard was busy transacting business, I remained at the hotel, and occupied myself

in writing letters. I wrote first to the *nourrice* who had charge of my little Fifi, and then wrote the following letter to my mother, hoping to receive an answer before leaving London:

"MY DEAR MOTHER:—I am on the eve of my departure for America, and even now I suffer with remorse at leaving you and my father, perhaps never to return. I pray, most humbly and earnestly, for your forgiveness. My little child is at Calais, under the charge of an excellent, good woman; and her godfather, Dr. Ross, promises me to look after her welfare. I should have wished to send her to you, but I did not dare ask from you the favor of taking charge of her, since I have displeased you so greatly. I am about to join my husband in America—that far-away, strange land, which yet is dear to me, for it is the home of him I love better than life itself. Is it not strange, *ma mère*? My cousin Eugenie's destiny was the convent, where, it is said, she enjoys perfect happiness and peace. She is also in America, and now fate leads me to the same land, where I also hope to find peace and happiness, although not in a convent.

"I am travelling with Madame Menard, whom you know. Do not fear, for one God is everywhere; but, if I do not arrive safely at my destination, oh, I pray you to remember my little child. Write to me at once, my dear mother, so that I may hear from you before I leave London.

"Your loving daughter,

"LAURE HILTON."

The next day, I received the following despatch from my child's nurse:

"MADAME:—Your child is very ill. She has taken cold while suffering from the fever induced by vaccination.

"MARIE TAUPIN."

I was nearly frantic with alarm. In imagination, I already saw my precious babe dying, struggling in agony, and I not near her! I ran to Madame Menard, and showed her the despatch, crying:

"Oh, Madame, tell me what I must do. Shall I go at once to my child?"

"Oh, no," she replied. "Calm yourself; there is, I am sure, no occasion for such alarm;" and, writing a despatch, she sent a servant at once with it to the telegraph office. She then said, kindly, "Wait patiently. If your child gets worse, you will receive an instant reply, and can then leave at once. *Au contraire*, if you do not receive a reply between this and to-morrow morning, you may confidently conclude that she is better."

I received an answer in due time, which relieved my fears, and I again became cheerful when I received the following letter from my mother:

"MA CHÈRE FILLE:—We have received your letter, but were already in possession of the news of your intended journey. Elise, on her return from Paris, told us that you were going to America; and your father was so distressed, that he was immediately taken ill. He is delirious, but wishes for your presence, and asks continually for you. François is also here, and grieves because you are away. Come home, Laure—come home, my daughter, and bring your child. All shall be forgiven and forgotten, and you shall remain with us until your husband comes for you. Your father loves you. He is ill and suffering; all his children are with him but you. Come, *ma fille*, to your mother,

"APAULINE LENOIR."

This letter threw me again into the deepest dejection. I cast myself upon the bed, and pressing my hands upon my temples, to still their painful throbbing, I thought and thought until my brain whirled in the vain effort to decide what my duty was, and in what direction I must travel toward it. My heart, at one moment, was torn with anguish and remorse for the base ingratitude with which I had repaid the loving care of my kind parents, in deserting them for a stranger; but now that stranger was my husband, and did not the divine book say, that a wife should "forsake father and mother, and cleave only unto her husband?" I feared my father would die, and then what bitter remorse would be mine! At last, I concluded to seek the advice of some one, who was not personally

interested in me, and who would advise me honestly and truly in what direction my duty lay; and, putting on my bonnet, I sought the residence of the French consul. He received me politely, and I informed him frankly and unhesitatingly that I was in a state of great perplexity, and sorely needed kind and candid advice. He gently bade me proceed, which I did, telling him all my story. When I had concluded, he remained silent a few minutes, and then said:

"And you love your husband so well, that you were willing to forsake for him, first, your home and your parents, and now, your native land and your little child. Why do you not take her with you, Madame?"

"Monsieur le consul," I hastened to explain, "it was her father's will that I should not nurse her; and I should be depriving her of her natural sustenance if I took her with me, for she is with a kind and good *nourrice*, whom I could not afford to take with me; for my means are limited, Monsieur. I can return for her when she is older, and better able to endure the fatigues of the journey." I then showed him my mother's letter. After a short silence, during which he seemed to be reflecting, he said:

"If you return home, your parents can compel you to stay there until you are twenty-one years of age; and it is possible that they have magnified your father's illness, in order to get you to return. You say that it will kill you, or, in other words, that you are wretched and miserable when separated from your husband; that, if you do as your filial duty prompts, when once the impulse is obeyed, you will regret it. In that case, it is right that you should go to him; but you are very young, and—begging your pardon, Madame—I must say that your husband has shown little judgment, and less heart, in absenting himself so long from you, no matter what excuse he may have."

I hastened to explain, seeking to excuse Dr. Hilton, whom I had never dreamed of blaming; but he interrupted me, saying:

"Well, well, my child, I hope you never will be obliged to

defend him, and that he will prove worthy of so brave a little wife;" and then, placing his hand upon my head, with a fervent "God bless you!" he dismissed me, and I returned home, resolving to go on, unless my child should become more dangerously ill.

But now another obstacle presented itself. Monsieur and Madame Menard were unable to carry out their original intention, as some unexpected business complications had arisen, which would detain Monsieur for some months in London. I was still undaunted, however, and receiving at this time a letter from my child's nurse, assuring me of her restoration to health, I determined to start alone, hoping that Providence would give me new friends in place of those I left behind. After all, it was not so terrible. When I was once on board the ship, I would not have to leave it until we reached New Orleans, and then Dr. Hilton would meet me, I was sure. Monsieur Menard made every arrangement that he possibly could for my comfort, and thus being launched upon my journey, solitary and alone, with nothing but an undaunted heart, high courage, and an unwavering trust in God to support me through all the perils I might have to encounter, I took another step in the path that led to the summit crowned by the fulfilment of my hopes.

On the cars from London to Liverpool I received kind attentions from some English ladies, who gave me, on our arrival, the address of a lady, Madame Denis, who kept a good private boarding-house, where I might hope to meet some of my own countrymen. I had spoken to no one in my own language but to Madame Menard and the French consul since I had left Paris, and in my ignorance of English, I could only show my gratitude to these kind ladies by smiles and expressive pantomime, which opened my eyes to the necessity of providing myself with a French and English Dictionary, in order to make myself understood. It was then that I first realized the difficulties which I would have to encounter. "A stranger in a strange land," blindly followed the

strong but invisible threads which Fate was drawing out from the warp of my life's many-colored web.

On arriving at Liverpool, I proceeded at once to Madame, or rather Mrs. Denis's, who, though of French parentage, could not speak the language. It being late when we arrived, I retired at once to my room, and soon forgot all my annoyances in sleep. I awoke early the next morning, somewhat bewildered at first by my strange surroundings. Mrs. Denis sent for me, announcing breakfast; then took me into the parlor and introduced me to her daughter, Miss Cecile, a young girl of fifteen who had been educated in Paris, and could speak the French language like a *Parisienne*.

It was like meeting an old friend, and I gladly improved the opportunity of gaining information, that I thought likely to prove of use to me. They were so kind that I told all my little story to the young lady, who, in turn, related it to her mother. They too thought it strange for one so young to be travelling alone, and Mrs. Dennis begged me to remain with her until I could write to Dr. Hilton and receive an answer. I told her that this was not necessary; that I had already written, and did not expect an answer; and that my husband would be waiting for me in New Orleans. I thanked her sincerely for her kindness, with many expressions of heartfelt gratitude.

The old lady, though evidently very benevolent in disposition, had ignorantly imbibed strong prejudices against the American people, regarding them as a race of demi-savages. She recapitulated with much earnestness, and with an evident air of belief, the main incidents of a novel which she had just been reading—an American story—wherein the husband practises the most refined cruelty upon his young and unresisting wife, and at last, failing to cause her to die in a natural way, takes her with him upon a water excursion, and seizes upon the opportunity to quietly push her overboard. He then marries again, his crime being undiscovered, and treats his second victim in a similar manner; and was about wooing a third, when retributive justice overtakes him, and he finds a watery grave himself.

"Such, my dear," said the old lady, shaking her head reflectively, "is the true state of American society, no matter what your husband told you to the contrary."

I laughed heartily as Miss Cecile translated this remarkable story for me, and assured Mrs. Denis that I was too certain of my husband's love to fear neglect and cruelty. Mrs. Denis had but one son, a young man of twenty-five. They kindly attended to all my wants, and made all the necessary arrangements for my voyage, with as much interest concerning my comfort and welfare as though I had been a member of their own family.

Miss Cecile and her brother accompanied me on board of the ship upon which I had secured my passage, and which was an American sailing-vessel, "The White Cloud," bound for New Orleans, and commanded by Captain Duncan. The tears started to my eyes as I bade my kind friends adieu; and as the good ship sailed slowly out of port, the cold chilliness of desolation swept over me as I thought of all I was leaving behind—my native land, and the treasures it contained.

"What if I should never see my child again? what if I should be lost at sea?" I cried, convulsively. These, and a thousand other possible contingencies tortured me with their feverish suggestions; but still I did not regret the step I had taken. Realizing that I was wholly dependent upon myself, my thoughts seemed to have become mature and far-reaching. I thought, and reasoned while I thought; and that night I lay down in my narrow berth with a calm and quiet reliance upon Him who was my only friend, ever present with me, and slept the calm sleep of a child watched over by a tender and careful mother. So passed my first night at sea.



## CHAPTER XXV.

## THE PERILOUS VOYAGE.

THERE was only one lady-passenger in the cabin beside myself; but I might as well have been alone, as far as the companionship of speech was concerned; for it was only by picking out the words in my dictionary, one by one, that I desired to use, that I succeeded in making my immediate wants known. But I will mention, *en passant*, that before the ship arrived in port I could count one hundred in English, besides learning the meaning of quite a number of words, which I wrote down in a little book, spelling them, after my own fashion, according to their sound when spoken; but I could not read the language, nor understand a connected sentence. I was extremely ill during the entire voyage, which lasted for two months. When we had been out two weeks, we encountered a severe storm, which was most terrific. The cabin was flooded with water the greater part of the time, and it was with extreme difficulty that I could retain my position in my berth, for the ship rolled fearfully from side to side. At last we stranded upon a rock; every moment we thought that the ship would go to pieces, but she wrestled like a giant in direst agony. As the mighty waves surged and plunged beneath and around her, she would reel and pitch forward, resisting their strong efforts to reach her quivering heart, her timbers cracking and groaning with a distressed, booming sound, that burst through the air like the firing of distant guns. Every piece of movable furniture was dashed from one side of the cabin to the other, breaking in fragments as they flew wildly about. My poor trunk shared the same fate. The captain came into the cabin and told us to pray to God for help, for no human aid could avail us. In my terror, not knowing what I did, I thrust the miniature of my husband into the captain's hand, and implored him to send it to my child. He understood me and said:

"Why, my poor little woman, if you are lost, we shall be lost together; but do not despair, God is good, and he may save us yet."

After many hours, the wind began to subside; but for two long weeks, the ship remained fast upon the rock—two weary weeks, slow and laggard in passing, during which we were at the mercy of the waves, which heaved and revelled in mad play about our hapless vessel, causing her to reel from side to side like a drunken thing, shivering from stem to stern, without a moment's cessation. Oh! it was very disheartening. One day I was lying in my berth, for I was quite ill, thinking how dreary and dismal it all was, wondering what the result would be, and indulging in gloomy fears and speculations, when suddenly the vessel gave a fearful plunge. I clung to the side of the berth and screamed aloud; for I thought we were sinking, and expected every moment to receive the cold embrace of the pitiless sea, when I became conscious that the ship was rushing through the water with what seemed to be lightning-like speed. The motion was so different from the dreary, monotonous reeling, that had been so wearisome through the long days and nights, which had seemed interminable; I seized upon the knowledge of our being off in the deep waters again with an eager, happy grasp. I could only lie still and enjoy the enchanting sense of sweet security, and forgot even to give thanks to God, until after the captain came joyfully down to announce the good news. The other lady-passenger had suffered but a few days from sea-sickness; but I remained ill until the end of the voyage. "Oh! when shall we reach New Orleans?" was my constant cry. I was so weak and dispirited, that my fortitude was fast giving way, and I would lie in my berth, and weep like a child, for hours at a time; when, one morning, quite early, I heard the captain's voice calling into the cabin: "The city is in sight, Madame!"

Can you imagine my joy—my transport? I dressed with all the hurry and dispatch I was capable of, thinking and expecting every moment that the vessel would reach the

shore, and Dr. Hilton would come on board before I was ready. Ah! how ignorant I was! I could not divest myself of the idea that Dr. Hilton lived in New Orleans; for he had given me that address, and I had almost forgotten the one Dr. Ross had given me; in fact, I had never looked at it after I had put it in my trunk. With the assistance of the chambermaid, I went upon the deck and waited impatiently; oh! how vexatious and weary seemed the time which it took our ship to get into port, and still more vexatious was the waiting for a pilot-boat to come to us. I begged the captain to send for some one to come to me who could speak French, and interpret for me. He kindly did so, and secured the services of a Creole, who was a very intelligent person.

I asked permission of the captain to remain upon the vessel until my husband came for me. He consented, adding:

"You will not remain very long with us, Madame, for I see you are nearly wild to be on shore again. Have patience, Madame; I am going into the city, and I will search the directory, find your husband, and bring him to you, if it be possible."

I gave him the address with my thanks, and he departed.

I sat waiting, with a joyfully beating heart, picturing to myself the delight and rapture my husband would feel when he learned that I, his "*petite* Laure," was so near him. I would start and turn at the passing of every step, thinking it was his, and was as often disappointed. The day wore away, and my thoughts were beginning to assume an anxiety too dreadful to endure, when I saw the captain approaching me, alone. I ran to him, stretching forth my hands imploringly, but I could not speak. He said, very gently, "I cannot find your husband in the city, Madame, nor hear of him. Are you sure he lives in New Orleans?" — "No," I replied, sadly, "I am not sure, but that is the address he gave me. I have the address of my husband's father, but he lives a long way off."

"Well, well, Madame," said the kind-hearted captain, "do not despair; you must write to your husband or to his father. In the meantime, I will place you at a good hotel, where you will be well taken care of until you receive an answer."

He then accompanied me to the St. Charles Hotel; and, placing me under the charge of the gentlemanly landlord, to whom he imparted the unpleasant situation in which I was placed, Captain Duncan bade me good-bye, promising to come and see me the next day. I shut myself up at once in my room, to write my letter to my husband. I also looked thoroughly through my trunk to find the address which Dr. Ross had given me, but alas, alas! I could not find it. With frantic eagerness I threw out everything that it contained, but in vain; and I could only conclude that it had been lost on board the ship, when my trunk became so much damaged during the storm, that I was obliged to take out the contents in order to have it repaired. I was grieved at the loss, and tried, but tried in vain, to remember how the word sounded, and recalled my confident boast to Dr. Ross, when he gave me the caution against losing it, that "the words would imprint themselves indelibly on my heart." Now it was lost, and I could not remember the sound of the words, much less the words themselves; and I was alone, a "stranger in a strange land," without friends, and almost without money. The next morning I wrote a note to the kind captain, begging him to come to me immediately; which he did, and I told him of my loss. He was much concerned, and, naming over a number of places, endeavored to revive in my memory the name I had forgotten. Among the names he mentioned, was that of Ohio, which I instantly seized upon as the right one, remembering only that the word (Yazoo) ended with an *o*, and so did Ohio, consequently it must be the same.

Captain Duncan then explained to me that Ohio was a very large State, containing many cities and towns, and advised me to consult with some lady as to what I should do. The wife of the proprietor of the hotel, Mrs. Harris, called upon me, upon hearing my story. I told her of the loss I had sustained; and she, promising to give me all the assistance in her power, wrote to a relative in Cincinnati, — that being, she said, the largest place in Ohio, — asking her to ascertain, if possible, whether my husband was there. In due time she

received an answer, and it is needless to assure my readers that the writer, who was a very benevolent woman, could give no information respecting the missing one.

One day a gentleman, who had heard of my search for my husband, called upon Mrs. Harris, and told her that he knew that a gentleman calling himself Dr. J. Hilton, had been in the city about six months before, for he had his name upon his books. He was a hatter, and my husband had made some trifling purchase from him. I was not in the house when he called, but coming in soon after, Mrs. Harris regarded me with such a bright look upon her face, that I knew at once that she had something to impart. We immediately went to the store of the gentleman who had so kindly furnished the information, which proved to be true; there was his name, indeed, but with no address; my eyes fastened themselves upon the well-known characters, as I thought that this might be the beginning of success. This circumstance, small as it was, gave me renewed hope, for it set at rest the doubt which some cruel tongue had implanted in my mind, that my husband had not given me his own name, but had been living in Paris under an assumed one. Of course I had never believed the slander; but a thorn always leaves a pain, to mark the place where it pierced the flesh, even when it has been extracted.

The days went by, each one uncoiling itself more slowly and more painfully. I did not lose my courage, for the unremitting kindness of my friend, Mrs. Harris, cheered and sustained me through this awful period of anxiety and suspense. I shall never forget the delicate attentions I received from this angel of goodness, whom God had placed so opportunely in my path. But for her, I should have died from sheer distress of mind.

My money was nearly gone, and my inability to make myself understood, increased, to a painful degree, the difficulties of my embarrassing position. There were many who looked at me with suspicion — I was regarded as an impostor. And here I will mention, with fervent emotions of gratitude,

that the American ladies, with few exceptions, are eminently benevolent and tender-hearted. In all my troubles, I always found some one of my own sex ready to befriend me; and when my heart seemed ready to burst beneath its weight of sorrow, and everything before me looked as dark as the grave itself, the kind, sweet voice of some sympathizing woman would penetrate the gloom, and with words of hope and cheer re-animate the faint and dying embers of my purpose, to new life and brightness.

I wrote to the postmasters of all the different cities, for by a strange perverseness of ideas these only were named to me, often receiving no reply, but when I did, obtaining, of course, no information.

One night, when hope was almost dead, and despair ready to spring to her place in my heart, I was pacing rapidly up and down the hall in front of my room, feeling as though God himself had forsaken me; Mrs. Harris came out of her room, and seeing me, came to me; and taking me in her arms, pressed me closely to her warm, womanly heart, and held me there until my paroxysm of weeping had subsided. She soothed me, as she had done so many times before, and at last I went to my room, and throwing myself on my bed, soon fell into an uneasy slumber, during which a remarkable dream visited me. I thought that I was still in Paris, in my own room. Dr. Hilton was sitting at a table, covered with numerous packages of letters, which he seemed to be sorting. Some he would cast into the fire, others he would fold up and lay aside; but at last, seemingly getting fatigued, he rose from his chair, and handing me a letter, said: "Here, Laure, take this and put it into that little pocket in the top of your trunk, and throw the rest into the fire." I awoke with a start, and thought that I heard his voice still vibrating in my ears. I remained quiet a little time; but the dream had made such an impression upon me, that I could not compose myself again to sleep. The gas was still burning. I looked at my watch, and saw that it was three o'clock. I tossed restlessly upon my pillow, occasionally falling into a fitful

doze, from which I would awake striving to grasp at a letter that would gradually assume such vast dimensions as to cover the floor. At length I arose, and turning on the gas, I mechanically approached my trunk and opened it. I inserted my hand into the pocket, and, to my surprise, drew forth a letter, which clung tenaciously to the side, so that it required a gentle force to pull it out. It was addressed to J. Hilton, New Orleans. I could scarcely credit my senses. I became so excited that I knew not what to do. I could not wait for daylight. I coned it over and over again; but being written in the English language, it remained a sealed mystery to me. I rang the bell, and asked the waiter, who immediately answered the summons, and who could speak French imperfectly, if he could read the letter, and translate it for me. He replied, "No, Madame; but Mr. Reeves (the clerk of the hotel) can do so; but he will not be in the office until five o'clock."

I passed the time until five o'clock, a prey to alternate hope and despair. My dream, and its wonderful realization, had inspired me with the belief that God was, indeed, watching over me. So soon as the hour arrived, I sent for Mr. Reeves. On coming in, he said, with a pleasant smile:

"Madame, had I known that you were waiting for me, I would have presented myself before. The waiter awoke me half an hour ago, and apprised me of the fact of your having a letter, which you wished me to translate. Every one in the house, Madame, feels an interest in you;" and taking the letter, which I thrust eagerly into his hands, unable to say a word, he read it aloud.

It was dated prior to my acquaintance with Dr. Hilton, (the trunk had formerly belonged to my husband,) and was as follows:

"CANTON, MISS., May, 18—.

"MY DEAR COUSIN JOE:—I received your letter, and am happy to know that you are well. When do you expect to start in your profession? You had better be in a hurry, old fellow. Do you know I am going to be a neighbor of yours?

I have bought some land adjoining your father's plantation, at Silver Creek, on the Yazoo, and I expect to have some jolly good times with you in that delightful locality. I shall be 'lonesome without you,' so make haste and come home. I shall be there.  
YOUR COUSIN R—."

Mr. Reeves was much surprised when I told him how I had found this letter, and congratulated me on my good fortune. I felt like one in a dream. As soon as he pronounced the word "Yazoo," I recognized it at once; and taking my precious epistle, I hastened to Mrs. Harris to apprise her of my discovery. I poured forth my story so rapidly, that I could not make her understand; and when I related my dream, such a puzzled, bewildered look came over her face, that I saw that she was far from comprehending me. So seizing her by the hand, I hurried her down-stairs to Mr. Reeves, almost dragging her after me, and stood silently by while he explained to her the facts of the case. A pleased, gratified smile irradiated her features, and passing her arms about me, she said: "And now I suppose our little Madame will wish to leave us?" I clasped my hands, and could only look my eager desire. She sent for her husband, and the arrangements for my departure were instantly made. Mr. Reeves told me that I need not fear any difficulties in the way of my reaching my destination, for the officers of the river-boats were proverbially kind and polite to ladies. I asked for my bill. The landlord said, with a low bow and kindly smile:

"No, no, Madame, you are welcome, truly welcome to everything my house can offer to you." I could not restrain the tears that would flow at this noble, generous act of kindness. Mr. Harris would not allow me to thank him, but hastened away, saying that he would ascertain what boat left that day. Mrs. Harris delicately inquired into the state of my finances; but I assured her that if my money failed, I should still have my watch; but it was not at all likely that I should need any more than I had before I reached my husband or his relatives. Oh, if I could only have spoken in words that she would have comprehended, I should have grown eloquent indeed, although

I could never have expressed the boundless gratitude that filled my heart toward this noble-hearted woman. She was a type, in my eyes, of true Christian benevolence; and if she is still living, I hope she will some day read this faint and feeble, but heart-felt expression of my thanks, not only to herself, but her kind, true husband, who was a fitting "help-meet" for her, and know that I am not ungrateful, nor forgetful.

Mr. Harris secured my passage to Vicksburg upon the steam-boat "Laurel Hill," laughing at the similarity of the name to my own, and telling me that such coincidences were good omens. After bidding my friends farewell, I went to the boat, accompanied by Mr. Harris, who introduced the captain to me; and recommended me to his especial protection, telling him as much of my story as would awaken his interest in me and insure his care. I mentally bade adieu to New Orleans as we backed out of port and glided swiftly by its crescent-shaped shores, and soon lost sight of the beautiful queen city of the South. I scarcely realized that I was on the bosom of the far-famed Mississippi, and actually in possession of a clue, that I believed would guide me to the presence of him whose absence I had so deeply mourned, and whose face I longed to see with an unutterable, nameless longing.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE FIRST DOUBT.

THERE were quite a number of lady-passengers upon the "Laurel Hill," from whom I received much kind attention. We had a very pleasant trip; particularly so to me, when I contrasted it with that other long one across the ocean. Upon our arrival at Vicksburg, my baggage was transferred to a small boat, called the "Key." Captain Moore, of the "Laurel Hill," refused to accept any money from me for my passage,

and expressed much sympathy and kindness; at least, his genial manner expressed this to me. I could not understand his words. "Growing small by degrees and beautifully less," was my thought, as I stepped on board of the little "Key." From the large ship on the vast ocean to the elegant steam-boat on the grand Mississippi, and from thence to the tiny packet, destined for the narrow, but beautifully winding Yazoo, was indeed a gradual decrease of the means of transition. The trip on the "Key" was of only twelve hours' duration; and at six o'clock in the evening we arrived at Yazoo City. I was trembling with excitement, and kept my hands pressed tightly over my heart, to still its tumultuous throbbings. My breath came thick and fast, and I expected, every moment, to see Dr. Hilton come on board. I knew literally nothing of the topography of the country. Silver Creek might be running right through Yazoo City for aught I knew to the contrary; but the word *Yazoo* was the predominant one in my mind. It was the goal of all my hopes! Now, surely, all my troubles, fears, and anxieties were at an end—all cast behind me, never more to be thought of; and I had only to press on to a happy future, whose rosy fingers beckoned me with alluring promises.

The captain came back to the cabin, accompanied by a gentleman whom he addressed as Mr. Hobson, telling me that he was landlord of the hotel. Seeing that I was quite ready to depart, Mr. Hobson offered me his arm to assist me in stepping from the boat. It is not the custom in France for a lady to accept such assistance from a gentleman, unless she is aged, or unable to use her feet, and consequently I refused. I saw that my refusal mortified the gentleman, but I could not explain; and, in comparative silence, I walked by his side until we reached the hotel.

I was shown at once to my room, where I remained until supper was announced by a strange and horrible noise, which I afterwards discovered to have proceeded from the striking of a round, flat piece of brass, called a gong.

Mr. Hobson presented himself at my door, to conduct me

to the dining-room, and again offered me his arm, which I felt constrained to accept. When leaving the table, he reconducted me to my room, in the same polite manner. Mr. Hobson was so tall, and I was so short, that this custom of walking arm-in-arm produced a very ludicrous effect. I was obliged to raise my hand to the level of my head, in order to place it in his arm, and it was impossible for my little, short, quick steps to lengthen out to his long ones, as he stalked majestically forward.

I had been in my room but a little while, when a servant came and told me that a gentleman desired to see me. Trembling with excitement, I hastened to the parlor, and met, not my husband, but an entire stranger—a short, heavy-set man, with a dark, sallow complexion. He announced himself as a Mr. Tamborine, and was, as his name implied, an Italian. Hearing from Mr. Hobson that I desired to send a message to Silver Creek, he came, he said, to inform me that he was going out to Colonel Hilton's, on Silver Creek, which was about twenty miles distant, and would cheerfully take thither any message that I desired to send.

"Oh, thank you, Monsieur," I cried, overjoyed, and full of happiness. "I will send a note, if you will wait for it."

I flew to my room, and wrote hastily a note which contained these words:

"MY DEAR HUSBAND:—I am near you at last. I know you will be so happy. Come to me, oh, come quickly to your little Laure. I have suffered so much! fly to me as if on wings.  
*Votre bien aimée* LAURE."

I returned to the parlor, and placing the note in the hand of Mr. Tamborine, begged him to hasten with it to my husband. At these words, he started. I could see that he was laboring under some excitement, for he trembled and shook like an aspen. He dropped the note from his nerveless fingers, rose from his seat, sat down again, then rising again, murmured some unintelligible words, and left the room.

What did it all mean? I was perplexed—puzzled. Was there some new trouble to anticipate—was my husband dead? Alas! I could only wait, and let time unravel the mystery. I have neglected to mention that the conversation between Mr. Tamborine and myself was conducted in the French language.

I paced up and down my room, restless and agitated, but still with a feeling of happiness not to be described, for my heart told me that I was near my husband.

At last it was eleven o'clock—when there was another knock upon my door, and the same servant again announced a visitor. I hastened again to the parlor, accompanied by Mr. Hobson, who was waiting to attend me, and found myself at last, after all the weary waiting, in the presence of my husband. With a scream of delight, I sprang into his arms; and with my head reclining against his heart, I gave vent, in happy tears, to the most exquisite emotions of joy that I had ever experienced.

As if seeking to make some excuse for me to Mr. Hobson, who was still present, Dr. Hilton looked toward him, and said something in English, of which I only understood the words "dead, dead." I have since learned that he told Mr. Hobson, in explanation of my emotion, that I was informing him of the death of my brother, who was an intimate friend of his, and who had directed me to seek his advice and protection. Mr. Hobson left the room; and leading me to a sofa, Dr. Hilton seated himself beside me, and then followed a long, tender conversation, in which I told him of all my adventures, and of our little child.

"Oh, Laure, how could you leave her? why did you not wait until I sent for you?" he said, reproachfully.

"Oh, do not be angry with me," I implored. "I did not hear from you but once after you left me, and when the time of your proposed absence had expired, I became so miserable, so wretched, I could not endure the suspense, and Dr. Ross advised me to come to you. I thought it would make you so happy. Oh, tell me that I have done right—that you are happy to have me with you, and are not displeased with me."



With a caressing motion, he smoothed back the hair from my forehead, and said, with a deep sigh:

"*Ma petite* Laure, do you not know that I love you too well to be displeased with you? but I am unhappy and miserable, my darling. My father is not aware of my marriage; he had been informed of it, but I was forced to deny it when I came home, he was so infuriated against me. He must not know it—no, not for a thousand worlds; *no one* must know it," he added, emphatically; and then, in a sad tone, he said:

"No, Laure, I cannot acknowledge my marriage for some time. I am too poor. We must live apart for a little while—only a little while, I trust. You must go to New Orleans, *ma petite*, and remain there until I can arrange matters so as to join you. I will hasten to you the moment that I can do so with safety. You will do this; will you not, *m'amie*?"

I remained silent. I was unable to speak. Terrible thoughts rushed through my mind, leaving deep and bleeding marks of their passage, as the ploughshare leaves deep furrows in the field whose yielding soil it overturns. Had I suffered so much; had I come so far, leaving parents and child behind, to be told that my marriage must be kept secret?—instead of being joyfully received and welcomed by my husband, to be sent at once away from him, and thus remain alone in a strange city, enduring the shame of being placed in an equivocal position, and tortured by the uncertainty of its duration!

My senses grew numb and paralyzed under the unexpected blow. Hope, that had sustained me through all my anxiety and trouble, grew faint and cold within my soul. I looked up, pitifully, at my husband, vaguely hoping that he did not mean the full extent of his cruel words—that he was only trying me, as he had loved to do in the old, happy time; but he only said, wiping gently away the tears that fell from my streaming eyes: "What do you say, my darling? What do you think?"

"Oh, Dr. Hilton," I gasped, the words struggling painfully through my sobs, "take me to your father. He will not be angry. I will render myself so necessary to his happiness

and comfort. I will wait on him; I will do everything for him, and he cannot help but forgive me, and will love me when I tell him of our little child. Oh, we will be so happy! but do not send me away from you."

He slowly shook his head.

"No, no, Laure; you do not know my father. He is implacable! No! I can only repeat, I am ruined if our marriage is known. Only wait a few months longer, and then all will go well. I am entirely dependent upon my father for a time; and if he should cast me off, it would be almost impossible for me to support you. By going to New Orleans, and remaining there, you will make me happy, and will assist me in fulfilling the plans which I have formed for our future. By staying here, you will seriously embarrass me, and render the prospects of that future very uncertain. Do not think of yourself, my Laure. I know you will be unhappy; but so shall I. Think of me, my darling, and believe me, when I tell you that the only way in which you can help me to bear my burden, or lighten it, is by complying with my wishes."

I withdrew from his embrace; and, laying my hand upon his shoulder, said, with a forced smile:

"Yes, Dr. Hilton, I will go. I have done so much that I am willing to do more; not for my sake, but for yours and my child's."

He caught me in his arms, and pressed me again and again to his heart, murmuring low words of love and endearment. For the moment, I was happy, thinking that there was no sacrifice which I would not cheerfully make for him. I looked up into his face, and my heart sank. All my childish dependence seemed to have returned upon seeing him; and I felt unable to struggle for myself, and incompetent to cope with the difficulties which I foresaw.

He was so handsome, so tender, so good, and I idolized him so, how could I leave him. Oh! what a cruel fate was mine, thus to be separated from all I held dear on earth!

I had rejoiced in the thought, that, when I reached my husband, I should no longer have to think for myself; and,



like a trusting child, I had thrown my burden at his feet, and now I had to raise it again, and bear it upon my own heart, heavy with the weight of added sorrows and cares. It was a strange, a hard burden for one so young. I must go forth alone; I must return to that city where so many knew my story; I must keep silence upon the fact of my marriage; I must endure all the odium and suspicion cast upon an unprotected, unacknowledged wife. A new and terrible fear darted through my mind while I thus thought; but I crushed it out as unworthy of both my husband and myself. God had protected me thus far, and I would not lose faith in him.

From these sorrowful thoughts I was aroused by an exclamation from my husband, who pushed me from him as he uttered it. The basket which I had brought with me for the sake of its convenience in travelling, was the one which Dr. Ross had given me so long ago. This basket, Dr. Hilton now held at arm's length, while he said, gritting his teeth, which was an unpleasant habit of his when angry, "Where is the basket I gave you to use in place of this, and which you promised me you would make use of? How dare that man stand godfather to my child? Do not tell me of his kindness to you, and of his good advice. I hate him! If you had not listened to him, you would still have been in Paris, and—" his voice softened as he saw my evident distress—"with our child, Laure."

I could only say, in reply, that the basket was more convenient for travelling purposes than the one which he had given to me, and I had thought only of that in making choice of it. His remarks about Dr. Ross I did not notice; for I saw that he was too angry to be reasoned with upon his injustice to his best friend. Just then I remembered that I had in my purse the little ring which I had given him, and which had been lost and found. I offered it to him. "Oh! *ma petite*," he said, "you found it, then? And I grieved so for its loss. Where was it?" He looked at it with a pleased smile as I told him of my finding it; and then, holding out his finger, he bade me put it on for him; then putting his

arms around me, he said: "Well, *ma chère* Laure, it is late now, and I have to go to Silver Creek to-night, and it is a good two hours' ride. I will come back to-morrow; so adieu, *ma petite*, until then?"

I thought, "He has bestowed upon me all the caresses. He will think I am angry. I will offer him one in return;" and I lifted up my face to press a kiss upon his forehead; but he drew away from me, and said:

"You have not yet given me your word, Laure, that you will go to New Orleans."

"Yes, I have. I will," I cried, and he bowed his head and allowed me to embrace him.

That night I wept through all the weary hours. My agony was so great, so unbearable, that I moaned aloud. The landlord and his wife, whose room adjoined mine, heard me, and the next morning they regarded me with such evident commiseration, that I felt deeply their unspoken pity.

At about ten o'clock there was a knock at my door, and Mr. Hobson ushered in Dr. Hilton. I was astonished, for I supposed, from our conversation of the preceding night, that our relationship was not known in the house; but Mr. Hobson told me afterwards, that, for obvious reasons, which I would know soon enough, he had listened to all that had passed between us the night before. I must here mention, that, although Mr. Hobson could not speak French, yet, like so many of the Americans, he could understand it very well when spoken by others.

My husband entered the room, and greeted me tenderly and cordially, at the same time sighing painfully, and saying:

"Sit down, *ma petite*, and let us have a long talk." We sat down upon a little sofa, and he looked at me long and attentively.

"You are not much changed Laure," he said. "You are looking almost as well as when I left you in Paris, and when you are rested, you will be again my own pretty Laure."

I did not reply, for my thoughts were dwelling painfully upon our approaching separation, and upon my child—oh,

when should I see her again? at length I said: "Oh, Dr. Hilton, can we not soon send for our little Josephine? I should be happier in my separation from you, if I could only have her with me." He started from his seat with an angry gesture, and said:

"Laure, do not speak of it. How could you leave her?"

This was uttered with less of anger than reproach; and then his manner changing, he added in a low voice, and through his closed teeth: "But you shall see her again soon—very soon." I was perplexed, frightened; he observed it; and again seating himself by my side, he began talking of the happy days which we had known in Paris—beautiful Paris; tenderly and touchingly he spoke of that charming period, so longingly remembered by me. "Do you remember, *ma petite*," he said, "all our trifling economies and savings? You did not know then what I was suffering, but I will tell you now. Some malicious person had written to my father that I was married; he was furious, and declared, that, if I brought home a French wife, he would turn me out of doors, and see me starve, before he would assist me; and he refused to send any remittance to me, unless I could assure him that the tale which he had heard was a false one. What could I do? My money was nearly all spent. I thought, 'If I can only go home to my father, and talk to him, he will listen to me, and become reconciled, and receive my little Laure as a daughter.' I wrote to him and denied my marriage, or rather equivocated, without absolute denial, and begged him to send me the means to pay my debts, and to come home. Do you remember how you proposed to save in so many ways of which I had not thought? How you dismissed Marie, so that you could make our coffee for breakfast yourself, while we took our dinner at the hotel? How we divided the tasks: you making the coffee one morning, and I the next; and how we would quarrel as to who could make the most palatable beverage? Oh, how happy we were, my darling; and what a sunny, cheerful disposition you had, *m'amie*, never complaining, but always bright and

joyous. And then, when my father's answer to my letter came, he bade me return within a given time, and I was compelled to leave you before your time of suffering had passed. Oh, my pet, it was hard—it was cruel. And even now, Laure, I cannot act toward you as my heart prompts and my duty dictates, for my father is absolutely unapproachable upon this topic of my marriage. Oh, I am miserable and wretched!" I tried to soothe and comfort him, and said that it was all past now, and if I could only have my little Fifine with me, I could endure the rest. "Well, Laure," he replied, "if you will do as I bid you, we will soon see our child. Do not tell any one of our marriage at present. If any of these people ask you any questions, do not utter a word in reply; let them think what they will, but do you keep silence. And now, when will you go to New Orleans?"

"When do you wish me to go?" I asked, as calmly as I could.

"As soon as the next boat goes down the river," he replied.

"Oh, my husband," I cried, "how can I go? it will break my heart! do not send me—do not send your little Laure away from you. I will work for you—I will teach—I will do anything rather than be parted from you."

He pushed me from him, and said impatiently:

"Laure, you will not think of any one but yourself."

"Oh, I do, I will," I cried; "but can I not go to some other place than New Orleans, where I can be nearer to you, and see you sometimes? Besides, I hear them talking so much of yellow fever there; what is it? is it dangerous? I am afraid."

He did not reply, but rose and went toward the door, as if to leave me.

I followed him, and cried: "Oh, I will go, when and where you will, only do not leave me in anger." He then said: .

"I will go and see when a boat may be expected. I shall not go with you to the boat, Laure, but I will see that everything is done for you, and your passage paid. I will come down this evening; for I do not think you can leave until in the night, and, it may be, not until morning;" and pressing me

convulsively in his arms with such violence that I almost screamed, he kissed me, and left me bewildered and unhappy. His manner was so excited, so different from what I had expected, or had ever known it; and his eagerness to send me away oppressed and filled me with a sickening anxiety and doubt. Alas! there are times when the foreshadowings of evil envelop us in their dread folds, and clothe us as with a garment.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE SACRIFICE OF ALL EARTHLY PLEASURES FOR MY HUSBAND'S SAKE.

SOON after Dr. Hilton left me, Mrs. Hobson came to my room, accompanied by a lady, whom she introduced as Mrs. Vincent. This lady spoke the French language very well; and through her assistance I was enabled to converse freely with my kind landlady. They asked me many questions, all of which I answered; but on the subject of my marriage I kept silence, as Dr. Hilton had requested me to do, although it was with a feeling of shame and bitterness never before experienced. Mrs. Vincent was very kind, and seemed to take a great interest in me; she gave me an earnest invitation to spend that evening at her house, and receive Dr. Hilton there, instead of seeing him at the hotel. Instinctively I felt that she was a sincere friend, and would prove herself so to me; there was also a sense of protection in my being able to converse with her, and make myself understood, and I accepted her invitation as frankly as it was given.

With the innocent desire of looking well in the eyes of him I loved, I donned the most becoming dress that I possessed, and which was of his favorite color.

I went early to Mrs. Vincent's, whose house was not far

from the hotel, and waited the coming of Dr. Hilton, at the same time enjoying a quiet chat with my charming hostess.

At last my husband came. I sprang impulsively from my seat, and ran to meet him. He restrained me by a gesture, and under the guise of a friendly greeting, he whispered: "I wish to see you alone, Laure;" and then turning to Mr. and Mrs. Vincent, he accosted them in English, and gave them, apparently, some explanation—what, I knew not, but they soon left the room, and we were left alone.

Taking my hand, and pressing it closely, Dr. Hilton said:

"Laure, I have seen my father, and have told him everything."

"How! you have not been to Silver Creek?"

"No, but my father was in town," he replied. "Laure, he wants to see you."

"Oh, he is going to like me; he is not angry with me," I cried, pleased and delighted.

"Not so, Laure," he hastened to say, frowning down my pleasure. "You mistake; if he knew I were here to-night, he would never forgive me, or receive me into his house again."

I was so shocked, that I burst into tears, and cried like a child. At first he attempted to console me, and then becoming angry, he said:

"Cease your crying! I have told you once before you were no longer a child."

I threw myself upon my knees before him, and besought him not to be angry, but for God's sake not to send me away; and in a tone of passionate entreaty, with my heart upon my lips, I cried:

"Oh, my husband, leave your father and mother—leave them, and let us go, as you once promised, to San Francisco. I will teach, I will help you, but for mercy's sake do not send me away from you. Oh, I am so desolate!"

With a proud curl of the lip, and a disdainful wave of the hand, he turned away from me, saying: "No wife of mine shall ever work for a living." He lifted me from the floor

where I had fallen, and replacing me in the chair, he resumed:

"Laure, I am trying to make a position. I was angry yesterday, and shall always be, because you came across the ocean alone; you, a delicate lady"—and he repeated, with an emphasis that touched me to the quick—"a refined, well-bred lady would never have thought of undertaking a voyage like that, unprotected and alone. You should have waited until I came for you. I am a proud man, Laure, and you have succeeded in mortifying my pride to the utmost, and I shall never forget it!"

I looked at his darkly-flushed and excited face, and read in it a cruel determination, that made me heart-sick and hopeless, as I pleaded my defence.

"Oh, Dr. Hilton, you are unjust to me. I did not know what to do. Had you written to me, I would have waited for years; but you only wrote me one little letter. For months and months, I waited, until I grew ill with despair and deferred hope. I thought that you did not write because you did not like to tell me that you were too poor to send for me. I had the money, and I believed that I was securing your happiness as well as my own by the course I pursued. Why did you not write to me? oh! you were cruel, cruel."

He turned his head aside; he could not meet my pleading gaze. A long silence followed, and I mechanically counted the pulsations of my heart, which were fairly audible in the stillness, while he remained leaning his head upon one hand, and nervously twisting his watch-chain with the other.

At length, with a heavy sigh, he said: "Come, Laure." I noticed that, during the whole of this interview, he never once called me by the pet name which he had always used toward me.

"Come, Laure, I can remain in the house no longer. Let us take a walk."

I went to seek Mrs. Vincent, and told her I was going out for a short time. She threw round me a warm, crimson mantle, and saying, "There, now, you look like the Queen

of Sheba," bade me good night; but I noticed that her face wore a troubled, anxious expression, as she added:

"Do not let Dr. Hilton persuade you to walk far. The night is very cool."

I returned to the parlor very softly, and found my husband sitting with his face buried in his hands. It smote my heart to see him thus abandoned to grief—he, my brave, noble husband; and I resolved to reproach him no more, but to sacrifice all—everything—in order to fulfil his wishes. I went to him, and placed my hand upon his shoulder. I saw that he was unaware of my presence; but I was not prepared for the nervous start that he gave, nor the wild glare in his eyes, as he said:

"What, Laure, are you ready?"

As we crossed the hall, his agitation increased, and he trembled so excessively, that he was obliged to support himself by the banisters as we descended the stairs. I was amazed, and asked him if he was ill, but received no answer. We walked on in silence; then, turning to me abruptly, he said: "Laure, will you go to New Orleans to-morrow?"

I replied promptly, although the tears almost choked my voice: "Yes, I will, if you desire it. But what about my little child? Set my heart at rest. Will you send for her?"

He answered, impatiently: "Do not speak of her. You should never have left her."

All this time there were two persons walking behind us, though not near enough to overhear our words. When we turned a corner, they did the same; and, at length, their evident interest in us became very annoying, and we walked very slowly, in order to let them pass; but they did not avail themselves of the opportunity, and, turning around suddenly, impelled by a forcible movement of Dr. Hilton's arm, we met them face to face, and I recognized them as two young brothers of Mrs. Vincent, whom I had seen at her house. We soon returned to the house. I asked him if he would go in; he refused. I asked him if he would come again to see me on the morrow; he laughed a short, quick laugh, and said:

"No, Laure. Before you are up, I shall be halfway to Silver Creek, and you have promised to go to New Orleans. Mr. Tamborine will go with you, and will see to everything;" and, pressing me in his arms with a force that pained me, he said "good-by," and left me without another word.

I went in; and Mrs. Vincent met me in the hall and said: "Oh, Madame, where have you been?"

I pointed to the hills that lay beyond an old grave-yard, toward which we had been walking. She said:

"We have been so much alarmed; and Mr. Vincent sent my two brothers after you. They followed you step by step."

"I know it. But why did you send them?" I asked. She did not answer immediately; but, seeing my wondering look, she said:

"I will tell you the truth, Madame. The agitation of Dr. Hilton's manner, and the expression of his eyes, aroused our suspicions; and we were afraid that he would murder you. He is a dangerous man."

I regarded her with amazement, and laughed incredulously.

"Why, Mrs. Vincent, you seem to have very little confidence in him."

"Yes; it is so," she replied. "I do not like his face; and we know him here better than you do."

"Well, we will say no more about it," I said. "I have something else to talk to you about. I wish to ask your advice."

I will state here, what I have forgotten to do before, that, won by the sincere kindness of Mrs. Vincent, I had made her my *confidante*. True, I was violating my promise to my husband; but I deemed it necessary that some one should know my true story, so that if anything happened to me, my parents would be informed of it; and consequently, I had made Mrs. Vincent acquainted with all the facts concerning my marriage. I continued:

"Dr. Hilton tells me that his father was very angry with him on account of his marriage with me; but he says, also, that Colonel Hilton desires to see me. What do you suppose it is for, if he is still so angry with us?"

She replied: "Dear Madame, forgive me, if I speak too plainly; but I do not believe this story. I believe that your husband is trying to deceive you. He intends to abandon you, but wishes to throw the blame upon his father. Take my advice; go yourself to Silver Creek, and see Colonel Hilton himself, and see if my surmises are not correct. Dr. Hilton is —"

I placed my hand abruptly upon her mouth.

"Do not speak in that way of my husband; you shall not! I am not angry, dear Mrs. Vincent, for I know you mean well; but I cannot permit you to utter such things of Dr. Hilton. They make me wretched and miserable. I am enough so already, God knows; but, in mercy, do not add to my unhappiness, by filling my mind with these terrible doubts. You would not think thus meanly of him if you knew him well." After a little reflection, I said:

"I will take your advice, Mrs. Vincent. My mind must be relieved of these new doubts. I cannot make matters much worse for myself. I will go to Silver Creek to-morrow. I want to make my father-in-law love me. I want to make a favorable impression upon him; so you shall come to my room in the morning, and select a dress for me; for I am so ignorant of the styles in your strange country. I am afraid I should present but an *outré* appearance, if left to my own selection; and now, good night."

And we parted, Mrs. Vincent promising to be at my room early on the following morning, and also to send and engage a carriage for me.

It was long before sleep visited my eyes; for the words she had spoken had a dreadful interest for me. I recalled the strange manner of my husband, and his evident desire to hasten back to the house, when he saw that we were followed. Oh, what did it all mean, and where would it end?

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## MY ARRIVAL AT SILVER CREEK, AND THE RESULT.

MY kind friend, Mrs. Vincent, came to my room at an early hour, and told me that the carriage would be at the door at ten o'clock.

It was, however, fully eleven before we were fairly started.

We crossed the Yazoo river on a flat-boat, and proceeded at a tolerably swift rate along a wild but pleasant road. Many strange plants growing by the way attracted my attention; and one, whose leaves resembled a huge fan, I remember, especially.

We had gone some miles on the way without meeting any one, when we met a gentleman on horseback—a very commonly-dressed, ordinary-looking man; but as he came near, a shuddering sensation run through my veins, and I regarded him closely, and perceived at once a singular resemblance to my husband. I was impressed at once with the conviction that this was Colonel Hilton, although my imagination had pictured him as a very distinguished, as well as a much older-looking person.

I asked the black man (the driver) if that was Colonel Hilton, and his affirmative answer verified my surmises. As he came near, he gazed with a steady stare into the carriage, and reining his horse, ordered the driver in a rough, commanding voice to stop; then riding up to the window, said politely, and in a more gentle voice: "Where are you going, Madame?"

"*Chez mon beau-père,*" I replied.

He shook his head, and said: "No, no, you must go back."

I, in turn shook my head, saying: "*Non, non, Monsieur.*"

He then said: "I am Colonel Hilton—return with me to Yazoo City—I wish to speak with you."

I signified my compliance, and gave the driver orders to turn back, and we returned over the same road. Just after

recrossing the bridge, Colonel Hilton rode up to the carriage and said to me:

"I will see you to-night at Mr. Vincent's, at six o'clock."

I bowed, and he rode on.

On reaching Yazoo, I ran at once to Mrs. Vincent, and told her of all that had transpired. Her countenance brightened, and she expressed her delight, saying:

"Now it will all be right; but you—your eyes are heavy, and you seem very much fatigued—come lie down and rest, and you will be bright and hopeful this evening."

I gladly obeyed her, for I was worn out and wearied almost beyond endurance. After a few hours' rest I awoke refreshed and hopeful.

At the appointed hour Colonel Hilton came. He appeared much older and more infirm as he came into the room than he did when upon horseback, in consequence of stooping very much when he walked, and being evidently obliged to support himself upon his cane. The resemblance between him and my husband was very striking. He asked Mr. Vincent if he could interpret for him; and on receiving an affirmative answer, he plunged at once into the subject; and without any ceremony, or entering into any preliminaries, he made known his object and his motives for wishing to see me. His manner was cold and unyielding, without politeness or gentleness; possessing a pitiless, freezing *hauteur*, that made my blood boil with indignation, and aroused all the pride of my nature.

In a careless, matter-of-fact way, plunging his hands deep down into his pockets as he spoke, he bade Mr. Vincent ask me—*me*—the wife of his son—if I did not wish to return to Paris—that he was willing to give me three thousand dollars to induce me to do so! My cheeks blazed in anger—I felt that my face had hung out its scarlet signals of the coming storm. I demanded: "What is all this anxiety to send me away? What does it mean? Answer me. Do you believe that you can bribe me to leave my husband?" And I haughtily awaited his reply. "Tell her," he said to Mr. Vincent, "that my son can have nothing more to do with

her. If she leaves quietly, we will spare her the mortification of an exposure; if she remains here, and attempts to annoy us, we will ruin her. Again, I repeat, I will give her three thousand dollars if she will return to Paris. I suppose," he added, with a shrug of the shoulder, "that I shall have to pay for my son's follies."

Mr. Vincent repeated this answer to me. I did not, at that time, comprehend its infamous meaning; afterward, I had good reason to remember it. "No! a thousand times no!" I cried. "I do not want your money—I want my happiness, and my husband's happiness, which you, cruel old man, are stealing away from us. I want the father of my little child to come back to me.—Hush," I said, seeing that he was about to speak; "do not dare to renew your insulting offers. I will not have your money; I will not go!" And passionately waving him from before me, I paced up and down the room. With an angry scowl, but without a word, he lifted his cane and shook it at me, then turned and left the room. Affrighted and overcome, I threw myself into Mrs. Vincent's arms, and burst into bitter weeping.

Early the next morning, Mr. Tamborine called upon me, and announced that a boat was at the landing. All was in readiness, and in compliance with Dr. Hilton's request, he had come to accompany me to the boat.

I was more than ever undecided about going. I felt that it was almost impossible for me to leave without again seeing my husband, particularly after the cruel interview with his father. There were also increasing rumors of a terrible fever raging in New Orleans; the yellow fever it was called, and I felt afraid to go there. Seeing my hesitation, Mr. Tamborine presented me with a note from Dr. Hilton, with the apology that he had forgotten to deliver it when he first presented himself. In this note, he implored me to go at once, promising, by all that was sacred, that he would follow me in a month.

This overcame my reluctance, and I went at once to the boat, which was just ready to leave.

A lady on board, a Miss P—, soon sought my acquaintance, and relieved the tedium of the trip, and diverted my sad thoughts from flowing in the channel of their own bitterness, by her sprightly conversation. She spoke French, but indifferently; she was Irish by birth, and her speech was strongly tintured with a rich brogue, which amused me very much, but of which she was serenely unconscious.

Mr. Tamborine was very polite, and made himself very agreeable, particularly to Miss P—, who had a keen appreciation of humor, and enjoyed fun and frolic intensely.

When we arrived at New Orleans, Mr. Tamborine conducted me to the St. Charles Hotel; and after securing a room for me, and attending in every way to my comfort, left on the evening boat to return to Yazoo City.

I found everything changed in the short period of my absence. Mr. and Mrs. Harris, the kind friends to whom I had become so much attached during my previous stay, were absent from the city, having been driven away by the terror inspired by the yellow fever.

I was at a loss to know what to do to occupy my time, and finally concluded to purchase materials and renew my baby's wardrobe. To this end I sallied forth, and leaving the principal thoroughfare, turned into a by-street, in order to find some store where French was the exclusive language spoken, and where the prices demanded for the articles I required were more reasonable.

I saw the name of Monsieur Menard over the door of a small store, and with an exclamation of joy, I hastened toward it. I knew that Monsieur and Madame Menard were probably in New Orleans, but I had not been apprised of their arrival, and consequently was much surprised, for she had promised to communicate with me as soon as she reached the city. I went into the store. Monsieur Menard advanced, and received me cordially and politely. I inquired for Madame. Vouchsafing no explanation, he led me into a small room, in the rear of the store, and introduced me to his second wife, whom I recognized as the *femme de chambre* of his former



wife. I was shocked and disgusted at the man's apparent indifference and callousness, as he related the circumstances of his wife's illness and death. I turned away with a sigh, and never entered the store again.

My poor friend had died of the fever, shortly after her arrival, and in three weeks after her death, her husband had married her maid.

I returned home discouraged and disheartened, and lonely and desolate were the days that followed.

The yellow fever, that terrible plague of the sunny South, was on the increase, making sad havoc in the ranks of the living army drawn up against it. A silent and invisible enemy, more dreadful to encounter than fire or sword, it dealt its unseen blows with a quick and fatal hand, and its victims fell in thousands before it, as the autumn leaves fall before the touch of the autumn wind. Sickness and death surrounded me on every side, and in my loneliness, without any one to speak to, my situation became almost intolerable.

At first I was not afraid; but in the long vigils of the weary nights, as one by one my neighbors were attacked—when I could hear the horrible ravings of the sick, and the pleadings of the dying, and witness the gloomy preparations for the dead, and the mournful processions through the street—my courage gave way, and for a time I succumbed to almost abject fear and sorrow.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### BLINDED BY LOVE.

ONE night, after I had been indulging in lamentations for my child, I screamed aloud in the anguish of my heart. Mr. and Mrs. Lasalle, who were boarding at the hotel, and whose room was the adjoining one to mine, heard my moans,

and came to my room, inquiring if I was ill. I answered in the negative, but begged them to come in, for I felt that I should go mad if I was left alone any longer. Mrs. Lasalle entered, and remained with me the greater part of the night, and comforted me beyond expression. I was extremely glad to make the acquaintance of these kind people, who immediately took me under their protection. They were of French descent, but only tolerably conversant with the language. In the course of a few days, upon their expressing some astonishment at one so young as I being alone and unprotected, in a large hotel, during the prevalence of a fearful epidemic, I acquainted them with my history, relating it unreservedly and frankly. During its recital, Mr. Lasalle frequently struck the table violently with his open hand, and muttered something in English to his wife. When I had concluded, he burst into an impetuous torrent of invective, and said:

"Oh, Madame, your husband is *un scélérat*! The scoundrel! he has sent you here, at this time, for what? You are unacclimated. The yellow fever is raging; you must go back to him! He is unworthy of the name of man, and is either an idiot, or a hard-hearted, cold-blooded rascal; he has murder in his heart. At any rate, take my advice, Madame, and return to him before it is too late."

"No, Monsieur," I replied, hurt and offended; "he will be here in a month: I am certain of it; and when I receive my first letter from him, I will bring it to you to read, to prove to you that my husband is neither a scoundrel nor an idiot;" and I turned away indignantly from his accuser.

Mrs. Lasalle made a sign to her husband to say no more; for she saw that my feelings were deeply wounded, and he abandoned the subject.

A few days after, during which Mr. Lasalle had seemed to be endeavoring to atone for his violent speech by his kind courtesy and attention, Mrs. Lasalle brought to my room a lady, whom she introduced to me as Madame Laboulaye. She was a Creole, and was a large, magnificent-looking

woman, of such pleasant, kindly presence, that I was at once prepossessed in her favor. After some conversation, she said:

"My dear Madame, Mrs. Lasalle has related to me your sad story. You have passed through trials that would have disheartened many an older woman, with a wonderful strength and endurance. You must not grow faint-hearted now, Madame. The Almighty is watching over you; you will not die of the fever; you will see your child again."

She said this with such calm conviction in her manner, that it seemed as though she was possessed of the spirit of prophecy, and I was at once impressed and comforted.

Early the next morning, I was awakened with the intelligence that Mrs. Lasalle was ill. I hurriedly dressed, and hastened to her room. She earnestly besought me to leave her; for the physician had pronounced her disease to be the dreaded fever. I stationed myself at her bedside; my fright and terror for myself all gone — swallowed up in the anxiety I felt for the sweet lady so suddenly stricken down, and who had become very dear to me. Her husband, Madame Laboulaye, and myself watched over her, devoting all our care and energy toward her restoration; but in vain. I supported her through all the agony of that terrible feature of yellow fever, the black vomit, bathed the damp dews of death from her forehead, and finally, with the assistance of Madame Jaudin, performed the last sad office of robing her remains for the grave. Her illness was of only thirty-six hours' duration.

Words cannot describe my desolation. The hotel was like a vast pest-house — a gloomy silence reigned throughout the building, broken only now and then by the shrieks and groans of the dying. I could endure it no longer, and I fled from this charnel-house; and the day after I left, Mr. Lasalle died. I found very pleasant apartments at Madame Clareau's, who kept a private boarding-house in a very pleasant part of the city; but there was no retreat secure from the invasion of the scourge. Death was lurking everywhere.

Soon after I went to Madame Clareau's, her only daughter, a lovely girl of fifteen, while walking in the garden, looked

up to me as I sat at my window sewing; and raising her hand to her head, cried, "Oh, Madame, my head pains me!"

I ran instantly to her, and led her into the house. We were met by her mother, whose pale, frightened face bore evidence of her alarm. A physician was summoned, but it was too late; before morning another innocent life went to satisfy the insatiable appetite of the dread visitant — death.

I forgot my own sorrows in my sympathy for the poor mother, whose only darling — whose "one ewe lamb" had been torn from her loving arms; and I was almost thankful that my little one was far away from the scene of contagion and pestilence.

After her daughter's death, Madame Clareau seemed to be losing her mind. She would wander about the rooms, wringing her hands incessantly, and calling the name of her lost treasure in tones pitiful to hear. She went out only to the Cathedral, for she was a good Catholic; and it was only the blessed influence of her holy religion that could soothe or quiet her in the least. I tried, as well as all her other friends, to cheer and divert her mind, but it was of no avail. She literally grieved herself to death, and died in a few weeks after her daughter. The physician pronounced the cause of her death to be yellow fever; but I never believed that she was afflicted by the dreadful disease. The prevailing feature of the fever during the epidemic of which I speak, and which was in the summer of 1857, (for it assumes different forms in different visitations,) was, in nine cases out of ten, a sudden, violent attack, the dangerous symptoms developing themselves with extraordinary rapidity, and dissolution was sure and speedy. Madame Clareau's illness was a slow pining away; all the powers of mind and body failing, one after the other.

The despondent, morbid state of her mind may have, and no doubt did, assume and develop into the symptoms of the prevailing epidemic; but she died of grief, nevertheless. I was obliged, of course, to seek another home, and consequently went to the Orleans Hotel. I found the house very quiet; and there had been a great many deaths there. In the mean time,

I had written Dr. Hilton several times, but had received no answer. I also wrote to Dr. Ross, and to my child's nurse, but had received no replies to my letters, which caused me much pain of mind, and aroused my wonder. I could not imagine the reason why I did not hear from them, but this shall be explained further on.

My painful position and embarrassment was extreme. My money was nearly exhausted, and I became almost desperate from anxiety. The fever was still raging without any abatement, and all were looking and praying for a frost. The whole city sweltered day by day under the close, noxious vapors of a dense, lowering cloud that enveloped it like a pall. A strange pestilential odor seemed to invade every nook and corner of the dwelling-houses; and the hot, heavy air was like the breath of a foul monster.

Madame Jaudin, whom, I have mentioned as having met during the last illness of Mrs. Lasalle, used to send often for me to visit her. She was a good, true Christian, and her conversation was calculated to comfort and support me; but she never guessed at the full extent of my troubles, for I felt a delicacy in telling them, particularly as the scales were falling, one by one, from my blinded eyes.

I could not but begin to doubt my husband, but with a reservation in the doubt. There were so many excuses for him. Of course, I was not so unreasonable as to expect him while the fever was raging; but I did expect a letter from him, and felt that he might have written to me. In answer to Madame Jaudin's inquiries, (I was too proud to admit the mortifying truth,) I gave her the impression that he had written that he would come for me as soon as the fever abated. One evening, at the close of a long, sultry day, I noticed that Madame looked languid and pale, and said to her:

"Come, Madame, the house seems more than usually close; let us go into the garden, and gather flowers, and distribute them through the rooms. We will fill all the vases in the house; and the cool water, and the fragrance of the flowers, will, perhaps, freshen up the atmosphere."

"Oh, no, my child; I feel too tired. You can go, and take one of the servants to assist you. Call Celeste; she will be delighted. In the mean time, I will indulge in a little nap."

And, taking up a shawl, she threw herself, in a listless manner, on the bed.

"Why do you smother yourself so?" I said, smiling; and, without waiting for a reply, I snatched up the scissors, and sped away to the garden, and was soon busy rifling a blooming rose-tree of its treasures. I lingered for a long time, loth to leave the pure and perfume-laden air; but, at length, calling Celeste, and bidding her bring the vases out in the front gallery, I returned to the house.

Madame Jaudin's room opened upon the same gallery. All seemed quiet, and we performed our pleasant task in silence, fearing to disturb her slumbers; when, suddenly, I heard her groan. I sprang up, scattering the flowers over the floor in my haste, and ran to her room, and found her shivering with a violent chill. Her first words were:

"Oh, my child, I have the fever!"

I sank into a chair, and burst into tears. She was perfectly calm, and gave minute directions as to what must be done, while we awaited the coming of her physician, Dr. Marcy. There was considerable delay; for he was absent, as were several others, for whom we despatched in all haste.

At length he came, and sadly verified her words and our fears. It was then about ten o'clock on Thursday night, and on Saturday morning, at three, she was taken with the terrible black vomit. Throwing herself back in my arms, she said: "I am going, my child;" and, with a sweet smile upon her lips, she passed away.

I returned to the hotel; and oh! the dreary days and nights that followed. It seemed as though every one whom I loved was doomed. Death followed me everywhere, and carried away from me all to whom I attached myself; and yet I was unharmed. In my despair, I prayed that the next shaft might be aimed at my own heart.

## CHAPTER XXX.

## CLINGING TO HOPE.

A WRETCHED, dreary month passed away, and still no letter from Dr. Hilton. At last, I wrote the following letter, determining, if I received no answer, to go to Yazoo City, and demand one in person:

"MY DEAR HUSBAND:—You have not thought best to reply to the numerous letters which I have addressed to you, although you must have known how my heart hungered and thirsted for a word from you. I do not expect you to come for me while the fever still lingers in the city, but if you only knew how painfully I am situated, I am sure you would not permit me to remain here. Oh! if you ever loved me, I implore you to send for me. For God's sake, for the sake of our innocent little child, who will be friendless in the world if I should die, I beg you to send for me. I am losing courage, and all my hopes seem to have buried themselves in the graves of my friends, never again to rise, unless at the sound of your voice.

"Oh, if you only knew the cruel things that are said of you! People say that you sent me here at this time purposely, so that—but no, I cannot write the horrible thought; I know it is not true, my dear husband, but my heart is so torn by anxiety and doubt, that I am nearly frenzied.

"My money is nearly gone, and I do not know what to do. Write to me, if only a few words, to cheer my fainting heart, and tell me, at least, when I may leave this dreadful place.

"I do not blame you, my husband, for I know that you are not your own master, and cannot act toward your little Laure as your loving heart would dictate; but words cost nothing. Write, then, and give me some hope and encouragement, or I will come to you to die at your feet. With the love of my whole soul, I am  
*Votre chère petite* LAURE."

It was ten days before I received an answer—an answer which struck me a cruel, cruel blow. I felt, however, that

some counter-influence was at work, some over-mastering power, antagonistic to me, and to my hopes. It could not be that the following heartless words emanated from the heart of the man who had loved me so deeply. Had loved? yes, who still loved me, as I fondly dreamed, notwithstanding the evidence to the contrary which this heartless letter offered:

"MADAME:—I have received your letter, in which you say, or rather threaten, that you will return to Yazoo City. You say that you are miserable in New Orleans, also that your money is nearly exhausted. I have told you time and time again, that I am very poor, and at present I cannot offer you even the miserable stipend of twenty-five dollars a month. You must remain where you are until something turns up. You have made my father furious by your foolish letter. If you write to me again, send your letter under cover to Mr. Tamborine, as I can then receive it without the knowledge of my father. I have nothing more to add. J. HILTON."

I need not attempt to describe my feelings, I cannot; but will smother down the agonizing mortification that even now flushes my face with its crimson glow, as I read again this overwhelming proof of his waning love and utter heartlessness. But then, fool that I was, I did not doubt his love. I thought that I had written too harshly to him, and I feared his anger. Restless and unhappy, I again wrote to him:

"MY DEAR HUSBAND:—You are angry with me. Forgive me. I am desolate and friendless, and if you desert me, I know not what will become of me. I could scarcely believe that you wrote the letter which I have received; but, alas! I cannot deny the proof the writing gives me, that your hand wrote it; but I cannot think that your heart dictated it. You call me Madame. Am I then no longer your *petite* Laure? Is it true that you no longer love me? Oh, you cannot be so base, so cruel as to blight my young life, and make me wretched forever. Forgive me. I scarcely know what I am saying, but as you hope one day to gain heaven, I implore you to listen to the entreaties of one who loves you with all the fervor of her whole soul; and who would lay down her very life for you, if so

poor an offering would give you happiness. If you will not let me come to you, will you not permit me to go or to send for my little Fifine. I can endure all if I can only have her with me. There is now an excellent opportunity for sending for her; as I know a family who expect shortly to go to Paris, and who will bring our child with her nurse to me, for two hundred dollars. I have written repeatedly to Dr. Ross, but have received no answer. Have you heard from him, or do you know anything concerning our child? Will you not send me the money, in order that I may go, or send for her? I must have her, even if I have to fight the ocean itself for her, although I dread again intrusting myself upon its fearful waters. Oh! I am very wretched. Reassure me, my husband—tell me that you were forced to write that dreadful letter; that you did not mean it, and that I am still

"Your own *petite*

LAURE."

This letter I sent, as Dr. Hilton had directed, under cover to Mr. Tamborine, and in weariness and anxiety awaited the answer.

The next day I was taken suddenly ill. Fannie, the *fille de chambre*, came to me, and begged me not to be alarmed; and comforted me with the promise, that if I had the fever, she would take care of me; as she knew all about the disease, and had nursed several persons through it. I sent for Dr. Marcy, the same physician who had attended Mrs. Jaudin in her last illness. He came, and assured me that my fever was the result of sleepless nights, grief, and trouble; and gave me a simple anodyne, and left a sedative draught for me.

Fannie attended to my wants that day and through the night, but on the third morning she did not appear. I inquired of the boy who brought my breakfast, where she was.

He replied: "Oh, Fannie is lazy this morning. She has the headache."

I was confined to my room and my bed for five days, and the only attention which I received was that bestowed upon me by this male servant.

After I had become well enough to sit up, he told me of the changes which had taken place during the few days of my

illness. Fannie, poor girl, was dead. The boarders had all left the house. The landlord and his wife had flown to the country; the greater number of the servants were dead or gone; and, added he, "There is only me and Aunt Kitty, and Jake left in the house."

I thanked the good fellow for his kindness to me during my illness, and remunerated him as well as I was able.

I saw at once the necessity of leaving the hotel; and waited for an answer to my letter, which came in due time. When it was brought to me, I was so excited, that I almost snatched it from the servant who brought it to me; and in my eagerness to open it my trembling hands tore it half across; and my poor, tear-dimmed eyes fastened themselves upon these words:

"MADAME:—You say you can remain no longer in New Orleans; that you will either come to Yazoo City, or go for your child; and you beg for two hundred dollars. I will send you the money, provided you go to Paris yourself. If you come here, I will leave the country, and you will never see or hear of me again.

J. B. HILTON."

What would you have done, my dear reader, under a similar trial? Would you have permitted doubt to enter your mind against your husband, or would you impute the baseness to another, and shield him forever in your true woman's heart against the charge of falsehood and treachery?

I decided to go at once to Yazoo City. Doubtless I should have had more pride; but I was too young—only sixteen—too ignorant, too dependent, to be actuated by any other feelings than those of love and endurance. I thought that, if I could only see him, and talk to him, away from his cruel old father, who, I was persuaded, had dictated those unkind letters, that I should be once more his own little Laure. Somewhere I must go; and I determined that I would go to my husband, and learn from his own lips whether he was so changed toward me; as I must believe, if I admitted the idea

that he wrote, voluntarily, the cruel words that had writhed their way to my heart like poisonous snakes, stinging at every turn, and hissing forever in my ears.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### OUTWITTED.

ALTHOUGH still very weak from my recent illness, I took my passage at once for Yazoo City. The trip was a very monotonous one, and I was very glad when the boat reached its destination. Mr. Hobson came on board, as was his habit on the arrival of the boats, and conducted me to the hotel, as he had done on my previous visit. I was so fatigued, and worn out, that I fell ill again immediately, and did not rise from my bed for two weeks, during which I was attended by Dr. Wright, and carefully nursed by my kind friend, Mrs. Vincent. Before I was entirely recovered, I was told that Dr. Hilton was in town, and was stopping at Mr. O'Donnell's, which was directly opposite the hotel. Fearing lest he would return to Silver Creek without seeing me, and not having the patience to wait for him to come to me, I went at once to Mr. O'Donnell's, and was politely conducted up stairs into a private sitting-room. In a few moments, Dr. Hilton came in, and hurriedly approaching me, took me in his arms, and embraced me as affectionately as of yore. For the moment, as I reclined in his arms, I felt supremely happy, and tears of joy and thankfulness gushed from my eyes. In that moment, I felt repaid for all that I had suffered. I closed my eyes, and yielded to the blissful emotions of a renewed trust and confidence; but his first words, and the tone of his voice, dispelled this sense of false security, and awakened me to the cruel realities of my still clinging misfortunes. The rest of this interview was like a dream. I acted

and spoke mechanically, and was conscious only of a numb despair taking possession of every faculty; and, without a remonstrance, I yielded passively, as a blind man to his guide, to the governing influences of the circumstances surrounding me. Dr. Hilton asked me abruptly, without an inquiry for my health — without an expression of love or greeting:

"Well, Laure, are you going to Paris?"

I replied: "I wish to go for my child."

He then said, in an eager voice: "If you will go, I will give you two hundred dollars as I agreed; and when you arrive there, I will send you more."

I did not reply. I was thinking that in my weak condition it would not be well for me to encounter the perils of an ocean voyage, and was wondering how long it would be before I should gain strength to undertake it; and feeling an utter indifference as to whether I ever got well or not, when he dispersed my thoughts, by saying in a rough voice:

"Why do you not answer me? Will you go or not?"

I raised my eyes, and saw a look upon his face that sent a pang to my heart, and wearily said:

"I will tell you this evening."

He muttered an oath, and gritting his teeth, said in a sneering tone: "Ah, you have some one to advise you, then."

I made no reply to this. I felt numbed and chilled, and only wanted to get away and hide myself in some corner and die. I felt like a person laboring under the influence of a horrid nightmare. I could not, at that moment, fully realize the crushing knowledge of the self-evident fact that I was no longer loved. Oh, no, it took a long, long time for me to learn that bitter lesson; and to see that he had repented the act of folly, as he deemed it, which had burdened him with a "French wife," of whom he was now anxious to be rid. One kind word, one softened glance from him still had the power to deceive and beguile me, over and over again, into believing and trusting in this bright phantom of my life's alluring

dream. I slowly left him without another word, and returned to the hotel.

Mr. Hobson met me, and asked me to tell him the particulars of the interview. This gentleman had proved himself to be a sincere friend, and I had no hesitation in confiding to him Dr. Hilton's offer, and the promise which had followed it. Mr. Hobson said, in an angry voice:

"Oh, the miserable, unhappy man; he does not intend to send you any more money, Madame. He only wishes to be rid of you. Take my advice, accept his proposition, Madame, and I will arrange matters for you in a way that will, I hope, result in some good to you. Go now, and rest, you look fatigued and ill."

I went to my room, and threw myself upon the bed, and was soon in a deep, dreamless slumber, from which I was awakened by the entrance of Mrs. Hobson, who requested me to go with her to the parlor. As I entered the room, I saw quite a number of gentlemen assembled, and was about to draw back; when Mr. Hobson came forward and led me in, introducing them to me as Dr. Barnett, Judge Barnes, Mr. Barksdale, Dr. Kidd, Mr. O'Donnell, Dr. Wright, Mr. Bastiste, and several others.

I here beg pardon of these gentlemen for thus publicly introducing their names; but I have no other way of testifying my boundless gratitude to them for their generous act of kindness and benevolence toward me in that period of distress and despair. Never will their kindness be forgotten, and its memory will ever burn and glow like a living flame in my heart, keeping it warm and bright in the moments of its greatest grief.

Mr. Hobson, after the introduction of these gentlemen, then said to me:

"Madame, you tell me that Dr. Hilton offers you two hundred dollars, with which to return to Paris; and promises to remit to you a further sum upon your reaching there. These gentlemen are here, Madame, for the purpose of advising you to accept this proposition, and of presenting you with

this purse, which will enable you to return with your child, in case he fails to fulfil his promises."

He put the purse into my trembling hands; and added, by way of caution: "You had better conceal from Dr. Hilton the fact of this money being given to you."

I thanked these kind friends as well as my trembling voice and imperfect speech would permit; they would not listen to me; but with many expressions of sympathy and friendship, they took their leave, bearing with them the thanks and the blessing of my full, grateful heart.

I went at once to Dr. Hilton, and announced to him that I was ready to accept his offer; and was quietly turning away, when he caught me in his arms, and showered kisses upon my lips and eyes. I stood like a statue; my heart seemed to be a lump of ice within me. I did not respond to his embrace, but when he released me, I raised my eyes and looked long and steadily upon him, with a yearning agony tugging at my heart-strings. I think he must have feared that I was about to retract my words, for a change that I cannot describe swept over his face, and a look settled thereon which aroused an emotion within me that I had never before felt toward him—that of anger—and which impelled me to say to him, in a low, but distinct voice: "Dr. Hilton, you think you are rid of me; and so you will be, for a little while, but I shall come back again; God will carry me safely across the wide ocean, and I shall return with my child;" and I turned and left him.

He stood as if transfixed, with his eyes glaring upon me, as I went down the stairs, without a word of adieu. He left town that night, and returned to Silver Creek; and the next morning I received two hundred dollars from the hands of Mr. Vincent, to whom he had intrusted it. In the purse presented to me was three hundred and fifty dollars in gold; so that I was now possessed of what seemed to be a fortune to me.

I at once made my preparations for leaving, and the next day was ready to start for New Orleans. Mrs. Vincent, and many other ladies whose kind wishes she interpreted to me, came to wish me adieu and "*bon voyage*."



There were tears in their eyes, as they whispered among themselves their fears that I would not be able to endure the voyage; but they repeated:

"Courage, Madame, courage; go, and return with your child, and your marriage-contract. God will bring you back to refute the slanders which have darkened your young life; and when your child pleads for you to her father, all will go well."

I will here explain that Colonel Hilton had emphatically denied that I was the wife of his son, and had persisted in calling me "a demented French girl who had followed the Doctor from Paris," with cruel and infamous insinuations which I cannot repeat. Ignorant as I was of the English language, I could only repeat to Mrs. Vincent the utter falseness of these cruel charges; but I saw that I was regarded by many with suspicion and distrust. My marriage-contract would have set at rest, at once, the implication that I was not a wife; but I had, unfortunately, left it in Paris.

On arriving at New Orleans, I found, to my great disappointment, that there would be no vessel going out for over a month; and a month to me, in my restless, impatient state, would have been a century. So I immediately took passage on the "Laurel Hill" for St. Louis, and proceeded from thence to New York without any delay; and, remaining there but two days, I went on board a steamship, bound for Liverpool, and was soon upon the ocean once more. We had fair weather during the trip, and made excellent time, arriving at Liverpool even sooner than we had anticipated.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### THE HOPEFUL MOTHER SEEKS HER TREASURE.

I PROCEEDED at once to the boarding-house of Mrs. Denis. Cecile met me at the door, and greeted me warmly, calling out:

"Oh, mother, mother! Here is Madame Hilton returned."

They gathered around me, and welcomed me as if I was a beloved child, and plied me with many questions, to all of which I shook my head. Mrs. Denis conducted me to the same room which I had formerly occupied, and folding me in her kind, motherly arms, said:

"My child, you are looking pale and thin. Have you been ill? Have you had trouble? Oh, I know that you have suffered!"

Then, and not until then, did I yield to a passionate paroxysm of weeping. Her womanly words touched the chords too long and tightly strained about my overburdened heart, and the fountain of my tears overflowed.

I remained in Liverpool but one night, and the next day proceeded on my journey, making only a very short stay in London. After crossing La Manche, I stopped at the frontier, where I procured a carriage, and hastened to Calais. The evening was dark and disagreeable, and my thoughts were sad and gloomy. I was once again on my native soil; but, oh, how dismal and sad was my return! My bright hopes and anticipations were scattered like the withered leaves of autumn; and since I had left my sunny France, I had eaten of the bitter fruit of care and disappointment. In the short space of a few months, a dark and heavy cloud had covered the face of my life's horizon, obscuring the light of the sun and the stars. The pitiless hand of Fate had crushed all the sweetness out of my life, and left nought but utter wretchedness behind.

All the sweetness, did I say? Ah, no; for I still had my little child; and my arms mechanically folded themselves across my empty bosom, where the little head had rested only a few short hours, yet long enough to leave a yearning memory of its touch, that had lingered with me through all the hours of my sorrow and distress. As we drew near Calais, we met a peasant, whom I called to me, and asked him eagerly if he knew Madame Turpin. He answered in the affirmative, and I then inquired if she still had the little *nourissiere*; and my heart hung upon my lips as I awaited his reply.

"I saw her a week ago, Madame; but she was very ill, and I do not think she can be living now."

I fell back in my seat, thankful to hear that she was living such a short time ago; for I feared that she was dead, because I had not heard from her. We soon arrived at the house, learning its whereabouts by frequent inquiries.

"I should like to see Madame Turpin," I said, breathlessly, to the person who answered my summons to the door.

"She is asleep," was the reply. (It was ten o'clock at night when we reached Calais.)

"Awake her. I must see her at once," I cried, imperatively.

"I beg pardon, Madame; but who are you?" asked M. Turpin, for it was he.

"I am a friend of the mother of your *petite nourissiere*," I answered.

He appeared embarrassed, but ushered me into a small room, where I impatiently waited the coming of the nurse. She came at last, but evidently did not recognize me; and asked me if I had come from the mother of her little charge. I replied:

"I have just arrived from America, and the *mère* of *la petite* requested me to come and see her darling. Is she well?"

"Oh, Madame," the nurse replied, clasping her hands; "she has been very ill, and is not yet entirely recovered. She is teething, and we feared she would die." At that moment I heard a little child cry in the next room. I sprang past the astonished woman; and rushing to the cradle whence the cry proceeded, I bent over the tiny object it contained, and my eyes were at last resting on my child. Oh, heaven! was it possible, that this miserable, sad-looking object, worn to a skeleton, and breathing with pain and difficulty, was my child? Where then, was the rosy creature of my dreams; whom I had seen laughing in glee, bright and joyous with health and vigor, and sporting in happy play? Oh, I could not believe that this was my little Fifine. "Oh!" I cried

angrily, "this child has been neglected; she has been starved. For God's sake give her to me at once!" and I caught her from her untidy resting-place, and showered kisses upon her. She was dressed in rags, and I tore them off at once with loathing and disgust; and after bathing her, an operation evidently new to her, I arrayed her in some of the little garments I had brought with me, while M. and Madame Turpin looked on in stupefied wonder.

After the bathing process was completed, I proceeded to interrogate the man and his wife, who seemed frightened out of their wits at my anger and energetic proceedings.

"When did you last hear from this child's mother?"

"Oh, Madame; with the exception of two letters which she sent us from London, we have not heard from her at all. The father of the child has written twice; and told us that the mother was an unnatural creature who had abandoned her child, and forsaken him also; and told us to do the best we could for the poor, little forsaken thing, as he was unable to do anything for it at present."

This, then, was the woman's excuse for the systematic neglect which had been pursued toward my helpless little infant. And having a child of her own, the *nourrice* had ceased to perform the duty for the fulfilment of which my child had been intrusted to her care.

And what had been Dr. Hilton's motive for writing in this strange manner; and what had become of the numerous letters which I had written? All of them could not have been lost.

Bewildering doubts and questions arose in my mind, but to none of them could I find a satisfactory solution; and turning again to the *nourrice*, I asked: "Her godfather, Dr. Ross, where is he?"

"He came several times, Madame, but in about a month after the mother went away, he also went to America. He paid us a month's wages in advance, and said that he would soon return; but from that day to this we have never heard a word from him; and up to this time, Madame, we have thought that the child's mother had abandoned it, or that she was dead."

"Should you recognize her if you was to see her?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, indeed, Madame," they both exclaimed; "she was *jolie, tres petite*, and rosy-cheeked, a little young thing."

"But she is not *jolie* nor rosy-cheeked now," I cried, bursting into tears; "she is a poor, delicate, suffering woman."

I then inquired the amount due for keeping the child; and, after a little consultation with her husband, the woman said:

"Two hundred and fifty francs, Madame."

I paid the amount at once, without a murmur at the attempt at extortion; for the child had been so shamefully, so cruelly neglected, that half the sum demanded would have been the amplest remuneration.

I then wrapped up my darling, and was about going away with her, when M. Turpin barred my progress.

"We cannot let the child go, Madame, without an order from its father or mother; we might get into trouble, if we did."

"You shall have it—I am the mother;" I said, turning and confronting them.

They looked as if they were dumb from fright and astonishment. Some little children, who had entered the room during the above scene, clustered around my baby, and began crying with grief at parting with her. My heart softened. These little children had loved my darling, and been kind to her, and for their sakes I restrained the reproaches that were trembling on my lips, and hastening to the carriage, I was soon being driven rapidly back to the place from whence I had started.

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

#### MY TREASURE BRIGHTENS MY DREARY FUTURE.

I WENT in to a little *auberge* in order to obtain some refreshments for Fifine, before taking the cars for Paris; and after attending to her wants, I proceeded to the ticket-

office to secure my ticket, and as there was very little time I hastened out; carelessly leaving my purse, with all my money in it, upon the clerk's desk. I had scarcely taken my seat in the car when I discovered my loss; and great, indeed, was my consternation. I placed my little one on the seat, and requesting a quiet, elderly gentleman, who sat opposite, "not to let her fall off," I ran hurriedly toward the door.

"But, Madame," I heard him feebly remonstrate; but I sprang out of the door, and was running at the top of my speed, when I met the clerk hastening toward me, holding my purse in his hand.

"Oh, I feared I had lost it," I said breathlessly.

"It is all right, Madame," he said politely; "I hope you will not need a second lesson to make you more careful in future."

I thanked him, and ran back to the car, which I gained just as the train began to move slowly out of the depot; my return was evidently a great relief to the gentleman to whom I had confided *la petite*; for, as he afterwards told me, he feared that I had abandoned the child, and that he had been victimized. "Such things," added he, "are, you know, not uncommon."

We arrived at Paris at eight in the evening; and I drove at once to Madame Victorine's, who was rejoiced at seeing me once more. Taking my babe from me, she began lamenting over its delicate appearance; and then plied me with innumerable questions concerning myself, my husband, and the life which I had led since I went to America; to all of which I returned plausible answers. I had decided that I would confide my troubles, and the treatment which I had experienced at the hands of Dr. Hilton, to no one of my friends in Paris. I was induced to pursue this course of conduct, not only by my reluctance to hear my husband denounced and abused, but by my pride; which would not permit me to acknowledge by word or sign to those who had witnessed his devotion, the mortifying treatment which I had received from the man who had seemed to love me so devotedly. It would have humiliated me beyond expression; besides, I still believed

in him, notwithstanding all that he had made me suffer. I was young and credulous — and then I still loved him — and I made excuses for his want of manhood. I believed that his father compelled him to the cruel conduct which had nearly broken my heart; for this was the impression which he had given me, and which he managed to keep up to the very last.

I, in my turn, had many things to ask of Madame Victorine; but, to my inquiries concerning my friends, she could give but few answers that were satisfactory.

Madame Boursin, she informed me, had removed to Fontainebleau, and Rosine had married Monsieur Blanchard, but where she was residing, she did not know. My child was restless, and kept me awake the greater part of the night; and when, at last, I fell into a troubled sleep toward morning, it was only to be awakened, unrefreshed and nervous, by the stir and bustle — the confused noises of restless life, that had once before awakened me at the same hour, under far different and happier auspices. I had no heart to look out upon the busy scene, as I had done before; and I left my room as soon as possible, to seek the companionship of Madame Victorine; for any distraction from my own unhappy thoughts was welcomed with a feeling that was almost pleasure. I had intended to go at once to my mother; for my heart was yearning for the sweet consolation which the presence of her, of whose love and kindness I was as sure as I was of immortality, would afford me; and Elise — dear, dear Elise! — how I longed to see her! But an uncontrollable desire took possession of me to visit, once more, those apartments in which my happy days had been spent. I say my “happy days,” for they were so few; and, God knows, I have never known any since. Contented days have been mine, and are mine, in a measure, but “happy days” have never risen or set above me since that far-away, blessed time. Madame Dupuis, whom I had known formerly, came in after breakfast; and, as Madame Victorine was slightly indisposed, I invited her to accompany me, and procuring a carriage, we drove rapidly to the Rue de Seine, and stopping at the house so well known to me, I asked

*la concierge* if I could be permitted to see the rooms. She answered in the affirmative, and, once more, I mounted the well-known steps, and entered the once-beloved apartment, where the sweetest dream of my life had flowed in one unbroken, musical ripple, like a singing stream through summer meadows, kissed by bending flowers, and overshadowed by warmest, sunniest skies.

My feelings overpowered me; and I sank, fainting, into a chair. The momentary weakness passed away; and I explained to the lady, who was the present occupant of the apartments, that they had once been mine; and added, by way of an introduction, that my name was Madame Hilton.

As I spoke, my eyes were taking cognizance of everything about the room that served to remind me of the charmed past.

The lady remarked: “I beg pardon, Madame; but you resemble a friend of mine so strongly, may I ask what was your name before marriage?”

“Lenoir,” I answered.

“Oh,” she exclaimed, “are you any relation to Madame Pinaud?”

“No, Madame,” I answered, my thoughts reverting, at the same time, to my early lover, M. Eugène Pinaud. My mind was so pre-occupied, I did not pursue the subject; but she went on to say: “They live in the Boulevard St. Denis.”

The words fell upon my ear with a vague sound, and I found myself repeating them after I had re-entered the carriage — so audibly, that the driver mistook them for a direction, and presently pulled up before a magnificent building. A gentleman came out, and inquired what our orders were? Madame Dupuis looked at me inquiringly; and, almost mechanically, I asked for M. and Madame Pinaud.

“They are in the country,” he replied.

I cannot account for my obtuseness; but the idea never occurred to me that Madame Pinaud could be my sister Elise.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE DEATH OF MY PARENTS.—MY LAST VISIT TO MY  
ONCE HAPPY HOME.

THE next morning, I went to St. Jean de Blanc; and, as I walked slowly over the well-known path leading from the depot to the farm, carrying my little child, who was ill and suffering, in my arms, a thousand memories rushed over me, and almost overpowered me. I was so ignorant, too, of all that had happened during my absence, that I was filled with fear and trembling.

I was forced to rest awhile at an old chateau which my father had once owned, but which he had been forced to sell during the disastrous panic of '56.

I was a stranger to the present occupants, but they kindly presented me a glass of the light wine of the country; and after a few moments, I went on my way, and walking up the long pathway to the old farm-house unobserved, I entered, without knocking, and proceeded to my mother's room. It was vacant, but it was little changed since I had last stood there by her side.

I arranged a little *matelas* with the sofa pillows, and placed Fifine, who was in a sweet slumber, upon them, and was about to leave the room, when the door opened, and my sister Elise entered. With a quick glance, I saw that she was in deep mourning; and with a heart full of foreboding, I threw myself into her arms.

"Oh, Laure, Laure, have you returned at last?" she cried.

I dared not speak: the sight of her black dress made me tremble with a strange awe. I shuddered, and at last managed to articulate:

"Elise, where is my father? where is my mother?"

Gently taking me by the hand, she said: "Laure, come into the next room with me."

I did so, and again demanded: "Where is my father? for whom are you wearing that black dress? Oh, tell me quickly?"

She threw her arms about me, and cried: "Oh, Laure, did you not receive a letter from us while you were in London, before you left for America?"

"Yes," I answered, with a groan; and then I screamed in the depth of my anguish and despair: "Oh, Elise, tell me, is my father dead?"

"Yes, Laure," she slowly and sadly answered, "he is dead."

In uncontrollable anguish, I threw myself upon my knees beside her, and buried my face in the folds of her dress, while she continued:

"All his children were gathered around his dying bed but you, Laure; and your name was the last upon his lips, and for you was his last blessing. 'Tell Laure,' he said, 'tell her that I forgive her, and I leave her my blessing. I wish I had not been so severe with the poor girl.'"

I sat like a statue. I thought of that last letter, imploring me to come home, and how cruelly I had disregarded it. Oh, my punishment was just. I had richly deserved it all, and I mentally prayed to Heaven to forgive me, although it seemed then, as if I could never forgive myself.

We sat in silence, which was broken only by my sighs. A strange and a new fear came over me; and with a sinking heart I raised my face, and asked, imploringly: "Our mother, Elise, where is she?"

"Laure, I have much to tell you; have you the strength to bear all I have to say?"

"Yes," I replied, nerving myself with an effort; "I have strength now. My father forgave me, and left me his blessing, and that gives me strength to bear anything. Tell me all, Elise, where is my mother?"

"With our father, Laure."

I fainted, and for a little time my aching heart ceased to bear its burden of agony. When I recovered, I begged Elise

to tell me all the particulars of the sorrow that had fallen upon us, while I was so far away. She told me that after I left them, they frequently sat and talked about me, and my father would reproach himself for his severity toward me.

"Oh," I cried, unable to hear any more, "I alone am to blame; I am the one to be reproached, and remorse has already begun to rend my heart;" and I almost shrieked in despair. "But they are gone from me forever; and I have henceforth but one duty to perform—to my little child, whose father I will rejoin immediately. Where are my brothers, Elise—Lucien and Emille?"

"They are still at college, in Fontainebleau," she replied.

"And François?"

"He was here during our father's last illness," said Elise, "but immediately after was obliged to rejoin his regiment in Algeria. We receive letters from him regularly."

"Well, Elise, tell me about yourself; are you living here alone? I asked.

"I live here part of the time, but not alone. Do you not know that I am married? A part of the year we live in Paris," she replied in an embarrassed manner.

"You are married!" I exclaimed, in astonishment; "to whom?"

She hesitated. I thought she had married beneath her, and coaxingly said:

"Do not let it make any difference; tell me, Elise."

"Wait, Laure," she said in a low voice, "I will send for my husband;" and she left the room, but in a moment afterward returned, and reseating herself, began in her turn to question me. To all of her inquiries I gave evasive replies. I told her that my husband was very good and kind to me, and that being unable to come himself, he had sent me for our child; and I was to return immediately to him; but I added:

"Elise, I have had a great deal of trouble, and I feel that there is still a dark and heavy cloud hanging over me. Do not question me; for I can tell you nothing now, but I will write to you, my darling sister, when I reach America, and tell you everything."

She looked at me in wonder, but I shook my head, and repeated:

"I cannot tell you more now—my strength is not equal to the task—but I will write to you."

At this moment we heard steps ascending the stairs; the door opened, and before I had recovered from the astonishment which his presence caused me, I was warmly welcomed by the husband of Elise, who was no other than M. Eugène Pinaud, as my reader must have already guessed.

I remained with my dear sister but two days; and then hastened to make my preparations for an immediate return to America. On the morning of my departure, I had a long talk with M. Eugène, in the course of which he begged me to remain with them; or at least to confide in him, and tell him all my troubles. I resisted all his entreaties, and the conversation ended by his saying:

"Well, my dear child, I will try to be content; but I can read in your pale, sad face the story of your unhappiness; and I cannot express to you my grief that you will not allow me to assist you. Do not forget, Laure, that I still—that, although I appreciate my sweet and gentle wife, I still regret—" he checked himself, and turned hastily away. In a moment, he said:

"Are you well supplied with funds for your journey, Laure?"

I thanked him and said "yes," although I was telling an untruth.

This interview over, we proceeded to the depot, M. Eugène carrying my little Fifi for me. It was with the most indescribable agony that I bade them farewell. I strained my precious Elise to my bosom, over and over again; for I felt that it was the last time that I should ever hold my sweet sister to my heart; and with Eugène's last words ringing in my ears, as once before, "Courage, Laure, courage!" I took my seat in the cars, and as we glided swiftly away, the dear old home vanished from my sight forever; and I was once more like a wreck at sea, helpless and astray, drifting, at the mercy

of the winds and waves, on the vast ocean of Fate; holding my little child pressed close against my heart; and praying that she might not be engulfed in the deep waters, and torn from my clinging grasp.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### THE NOBLE SEA-CAPTAIN.

I DID not return to Paris, but proceeded directly to Havre, where I stopped at the Hotel de Bourges.

My funds were getting low; so I determined to take the cheapest accommodations that I could, consistently. I learned at the office of the hotel, that a steamship would go out that very night. I told the clerk that I wished to see the captain of the vessel, and he promised to send him to me. I gave him my name, and hastened back to my room to my little Fifine, who seemed to be growing weaker and weaker. Oh, who but God can tell the anguish and distress of a mother's heart, when she finds herself unable and impotent to relieve the sufferings of her poor, little, languishing babe.

I knew not what to do. I sent for a physician, and told him candidly of the circumstances by which I was surrounded, and implored him to give me advice. He told me frankly, that if I remained in the dingy, unwholesome hotel, he believed that my child would die. He said: "She needs strengthening and nourishing food, Madame. Your babe has been half starved. I will send you a mixture, which, I hope, will soon produce a change for the better; and I think you can proceed with your journey in safety. The ocean air will invigorate and strengthen her." And refusing the fee which I proffered him, he left me.

The captain of the vessel was soon after announced. He was a noble-looking man, and his kind face was a true index of his heart. I felt a confidence in him that impelled me to

trust him; and I was right, for a more noble-hearted being never existed than this kind, good man.

When he first entered my room, I was bending over my little child, adjusting the cover carefully over her; and almost the first question which the good man asked me, was:

"Is that your babe, Madame?"

"Yes, Monsieur. And she is very ill."

"And do you intend to make this trip across the ocean alone with that *petite languissante enfant*?" he continued.

"No, Monsieur, I am not alone," I said in a calm voice.

"What! is your husband with you? Why, then, does he not attend to your passage for you? is he sick too?" he asked, pouring out his questions with rapidity.

"No, my husband is not with me; but I am not alone. I have a friend who is better than all others. It is God, who has watched over me through many trials. I will tell you my history, and you shall judge."

When I had finished my recital, he arose, and bowing low before me, said:

"Madame, your limited means need not give you any trouble, on this side of the Atlantic at least. Come on board, Madame, as soon as possible, and you shall be cared for as my own child. You are no older than my youngest daughter. We will start about nine o'clock, or a little later, if the night is clear and fair." And so saying, he bowed out of the room.

I immediately began my preparations for leaving; and the recollection of my former sufferings prompted me to fortify myself against my old enemy, sea-sickness, as well as I could. I obtained some very fine brandy, and a number of necessary articles for my child, and by eight o'clock was on ship-board; more fully and better prepared than I had been for either of the two preceding voyages.

We did not get under way until the next day at noon. I was not upon deck when we pushed out; so, I was spared the pain of seeing the shores of my beloved France receding from my gaze, for, perhaps, the last time.

My little Fifine was quite ill, but, fortunately, there was a



physician on board, a Dr. Leslie, who rendered me great service in restoring my darling to health; and by the time our voyage was nearly ended, she was much better, and improving daily. I was a happy mother. I loved—oh, how I loved my child, and her little winsome ways and pleasant smiles were the delight and solace of my heart.

There were a great many deck passengers on board, but only a limited number in the cabin, but they ~~were~~ were very agreeable and pleasant.

We were but twelve days in our transit across the ocean, and had fine weather nearly all of the time.

I will not dwell upon the incidents connected with this trip; for as I write I experience the like impatience consuming me, that I then felt, so anxious was I to arrive quickly at the end of my journey. I thought if I could but place my child in her father's arms, that the sight of her would drive away all his unmanly fears of poverty, and of his father's anger, and that he would joyfully take us to his heart.

I indulged in pleasant anticipations of the future, and lived over and over again in imagination the scene of our meeting, when I should present to him his child. I thought that the sweet sense of protection, and the impulses of sacred duty, which a true man always feels when such dependent beings as wife and children look up to him for his cherishing love and care, would take possession of his heart to the exclusion of all other feelings, and banish forever the puerile fears and debasing alarms that characterized him while he was under the iron rule of his cruel father.

Once more I stepped upon American soil. I did not remain but a few hours in New Orleans, but proceeded at once to the steamboat, and pursued my journey without delay.

On the boat was a lady from Mobile, Mrs. Wolfe, and a pleasant-faced sister of charity, "Sister Marie."

We soon became acquainted, through my little Fifine, (a child always serves as an introduction between women,) and Mrs. Wolfe became quite interested in my recital of different scenes that had come under my observation in travelling.

"Sister Marie" spoke French fluently, so we had no difficulty in keeping up an animated conversation.

Mrs. Wolfe expressed herself as much interested in me; and her gentle face and thoughtful acts of friendship so won upon me, that I was induced to acquaint her with my sad story; and not only from these motives, but from others, which I will here mention. My youthful appearance, and lonely, unprotected position, subjected me to many unpleasant remarks, and cruel, unkind suspicions, which were very painful and humiliating to endure; and in order to suppress these ungenerous emanations of debased minds, which sometimes resulted in unpleasantly polite attentions from gentlemen, (so called,) and shrugs of the shoulders, tossings of the head, and contemptuous turning aside, and other like demonstrations from my own sex. My only recourse was to make known my story, and trust to the chivalry of the one sex, and the tender sympathies of the other, and the result was always the same; for in no instance was I made to regret it;—and this fact is, to me, a fine argument in favor of the generosity and charity of human nature.

We arrived at Vicksburg quite early in the morning, and Mrs. Wolfe came herself to awaken me, and she and her husband accompanied me on board of the "Home," the little packet bound for Yazoo, and whose very name seemed like a good omen. Oh, how sanguine I was! I had thoughtlessly left my handkerchief on leaving the boat, and the morning air being fresh and chilly, I was about to go to my trunk, to procure another, to tie about Fifine's neck, when Mrs. Wolfe took one from her own neck, and put it on the child. I have this handkerchief in my possession yet; and I shall keep it as long as its threads hold together, as a simple memento of this excellent woman's kindness and friendship. This true, good friend had sympathized with me with all the fervor of a warm and impulsive nature. And here let me again refer to what I have already stated, in regard to the trials, the humiliations, to which I was subjected by the doubts and suspicions of my own sex. The more extensive knowledge of human

nature, which I have acquired during the many years that have intervened since the time of which I am writing, impels me to the belief that such unkind demonstrations are only indulged in by those who have the least claim to the refined and delicate sensibilities, ennobling attributes, and benevolent impulses, that guide the conduct, and find an abiding-place in the heart of every true woman.

Mrs. Wolfe was pre-eminently a lady of this latter distinction; and her husband, together with her two little daughters, appeared to worship her. I cannot recall the names of these two charming little girls. They must be grown young ladies now, and it would give me great happiness to meet them. I remember with gratitude that the eldest gave my *petite* Fifine a beautiful embroidered sacque. After I had told my story to Mrs. Wolfe, she seemed to entertain doubts as to my finding the realizations of all my bright anticipations; and told me, repeating it again and again, and giving me her address:

"Should your hopes not be fulfilled, dear child, or should you encounter adverse circumstances, and need a friend, write to me, and I will endeavor to aid you."

She only gently hinted at the possibility of my being compelled to have recourse to my own exertions in order to support myself and child; and it was with rare delicacy that she intimated that, if I needed assistance in that way, she could and would obtain a situation for me as governess. I thanked her with a full, grateful heart, but at the same time I did not contemplate ever being reduced to such extremity. It is true, I was willing to aid my husband in his poverty; but I expected to do so by giving French and music lessons at my own house, and had already mentioned to him my willingness to do so.

It was with real sorrow and regret that I bade adieu to Mr. and Mrs. Wolfe; but my joy at being so near my destination, and the remembrance that every hour brought me nearer to my husband, soon drove, for the time being, every other feeling from my heart.

When we reached Yazoo, I hastened at once to the hotel,

and was kindly welcomed by Mr. Hobson, who gave me the same little room which I had formerly occupied. Mrs. Hobson came at once to see me, and showered kisses and praises upon my little Fifine, who clung to her as if she had known her all her short life. Mrs. Vincent was soon apprised of my arrival, and came eagerly to greet me; and I felt as if I were with kind friends, who would care for me and love me.

I decided to write at once to Dr. Hilton, who was at Silver Creek; and consequently I dispatched to him as soon as possible the following letter:

"MY DEAR HUSBAND:—I am here once more, and almost wild with happiness, in the expectation of soon seeing you. Hasten to me; for I await you with impatience, and long to place your child in your arms, that you may embrace and bless her. Oh, I know you will love her! She is inexpressibly dear to me; but, oh, she fails to fill the aching void in my heart, occasioned by your absence. I cannot write more. I am so excited with joy at the thought of so soon seeing you, that I can scarcely guide my pen. Come quickly to me. I press little Fifine to my heart for you.

"Votre chère LAURE."

Three days passed away, and I received no answer—my anxiety was extreme. Mrs. Hobson strongly advised my going at once to Silver Creek, and I finally concluded to do so; although I dreaded encountering my husband's father, whom I dreaded as children dread the ogre of their nurse's tales. I hired a carriage, and, although it was a bitter, cold day, started to go to my husband. I wrapped my child up as warmly as possible in shawls and blankets; but the day was so intensely cold, that I was fearful that we should freeze. We had gone about ten miles, when we came to a low, small house, and I was suffering so, that I ordered the driver to stop. An elderly gentleman came out, and coming to the side of the carriage, said:

"Madame, is not your child very cold?"

"Yes, sir," I replied.

"Come in at once, and get warm," he said. "Your child seems to be nearly frozen."

I bent down to touch my baby's cheek with my lips, and found it like marble. A cold chill struck its icy arrow to my heart. I strove to rise, but it was impossible; my feet and limbs were so nearly frozen. The old gentleman lifted me from the carriage, and carried me into the house. A kind, pleasant-looking woman came forward and took my babe; while I was placed in a large, comfortable chair near the fireplace, which was almost as wide as the room, and where an immense fire was blazing. I suffered terribly, as I began to feel the effects of the fire. My head and face was racked with neuralgic pains, and my little Fifine seemed benumbed and stupid, and I feared that she was dying.

The good lady brought me some coffee, which I drank with avidity, and also gave me some warm milk for my child; but she could scarcely swallow it.

I grew better after drinking the coffee; and, as I was perfectly warm once more, and my child began to revive, I was about to thank these kind people for their hospitality, and continue on my way; when the door opened, and a gentleman entered, carrying a cane, whom I at once recognized as Col. Hilton.

"Oh," I thought; "must this man forever come between my husband and me," for I remembered that I had met him on the way in my former attempt to go to Silver Creek; and it seemed as though fate was, indeed, unpropitious, that he should thus meet and thwart me a second time. But, with my mind forming a resolve, that I would not yield to him—that he should not keep me from my husband, I rose to meet him. He drew up a chair, and seated himself beside me, motioning me to resume my seat. I did so; and at once he began a conversation with me, which was conducted principally by signs and motions; an expressive pantomime of which I will give the substance.

He first asked me if I would not prefer remaining at that house all night, as it was so cold. I shook my head emphatically. He seemed angry, and placed his hand heavily upon my knee, and bending his face down to a level with mine,

every feature working with passion, hissed something in my ears which I could not understand, but knew that it was something base and cruel. Then suddenly changing, he pointed to Fifine, who was lying on my lap, and then to me; and asked me if I nursed her myself.

I drew back my chair and gazed at him in astonishment. He knew that I had been separated from my child for several months; hence his question appeared simply ridiculous, and insulting. He then said, in a harsh, stern tone:

"Where are you going, Madame?"

"I am going to my husband," I replied.

"*Your husband?*" he repeated with a sneer.

"Yes, Monsieur—my husband," I said indignantly; for the sneer, and the tone of voice, from the man I so anxiously wished to know and respect, and conciliate for my husband's sake, was like the stab of a sharp knife through my heart. I stood up before him, with my babe in my arms, and repeated my words; then turning away, I hastened to the door; for I intended leaving the house immediately; when he quickly followed me, and with a perceptible change in his manner, led me back to my chair, and gently seated me, laying his hand kindly on my shoulder, as he did so; he then stooped down and fondled my child. I felt my heart softening toward him; and oh, how fervently I wished at that moment for the power of making myself understood. I would have poured my very soul out at his feet. Surely the knowledge of all that I had suffered, and the depth of my great love for his son, who was also dear to him, and the sight of my poor, pale little child—his son's child—would surely have melted that heart of marble; and he would have loved me, and forgiven me the offence I had unconsciously committed, of marrying his child. Oh, if I could only have spoken; only have expressed the emotions surging through my heart, which could not be kindled into speech in the strange, cold tongue. I believe that much of the after sorrow would have been averted, but I was speechless, though I smiled up into the face of the cruel man who was caressing my little child, although I

knew that the caresses were only bestowed in order to weaken my determination to proceed that night. After a little time, during which I waited for him to make some further demonstration of his humor, he said:

"It is useless, Madame, for you to proceed; he is not there, he is gone — gone — gone!" gesticulating with his outstretched hand.

"Gone?" I repeated, looking at him, bewildered, and in doubt as to his meaning. Was my husband dead, or had he cruelly gone away, so that he might not see me?

"Gone — gone!" I cried; and with a scream, I sank down on the floor in passionate despair — oblivious to the presence of my enemy, for such I knew him to be, and to everything else.

He left the room without another word; and the lady of the house entering, tried by all the means in her power to comfort me, and advised me to stay all night, adding: "It is now very late; wait until morning, Madame, when you will be refreshed and better able to go on. Besides, Colonel Hilton has ordered your vehicle and its driver back to Yazoo City." My anger and grief knew no bounds, but they were alike impotent. I could do nothing but submit. The mere fact of his having sent the carriage back, was, strangely enough, of the greatest comfort to me, since it had the effect of reawakening hope in my heart. "Surely," I reasoned, "his object is to prevent my going to his house. I feel assured my husband is there, or he would not take such positive measures to prevent my going there. I will accept this good lady's invitation, and rest here all night. I will endeavor to sleep, so that I may be fresh and strong in the morning; and if I can do no better, I will walk to Silver Creek. I will go to my husband; and though man tries to prevent me, God will protect me and help me."

With these thoughts sustaining me, I forced myself to partake of some supper, and soon after retired.

How vividly I recall everything connected with this wretched period of my life. A black woman came into my room and assisted me in putting my little Fifi to sleep, rubbing her

poor little feet and ankles, and making everything comfortable for the night, while her incessant chatter fell upon my ear like the confused sounds heard in a dream. When all her arrangements for the night were completed, she wrapped herself in a blanket, lay down in front of the fire, and was soon sound asleep. Not so with me; I was restless and miserable. My thoughts held wild and uncontrolled revel in my weary brain; and daylight came while I was still wooing the coy maiden, Sleep, who had persistently refused to accord me her favors through the live-long night. I arose and dressed my child and myself, and waited impatiently for my kind hostess to appear.

I was sitting by the window, gazing out upon the cold, cheerless scene, and watching a negro girl who was busily sweeping the gallery; when, to my surprise, I saw Colonel Hilton riding up to the house on horseback. He did not perceive me; but addressing the girl, I heard him, (as if by inspiration,) distinctly give her an order to tell her master and mistress not to let me have any conveyance whatever, except upon the condition that I would return to Yazoo City.

As I gathered the import of these words, I seemed to become endowed with new strength, and to acquire a stronger determination, if that was possible. I went to the breakfast-table, and again forced myself to eat; for I felt a prescience of coming evil, and knew that I would need all my physical strength, as well as mental courage, to enable me to pass through the approaching trial.

After breakfast I requested my host to furnish me with a carriage. He did not answer me, but looked distressed, and his countenance was full of pity for me. He called his wife; she came, and endeavored to persuade me to return to Yazoo City.

"No," I replied, peremptorily; "I will go forward. I will walk, rather than fail in my purpose. I have come too far to fail now."

She still tried to dissuade me, saying that it was very far, but she failed to alter my determination. I thanked her as well as my tears and broken speech would permit; and wrap-

ping myself and child in our shawls, which, alas, were but poor protection against the cold, searching winds, I started upon my painful and difficult undertaking.

The roads, from the recent rains, were in a terrible condition, and stretched out interminably before me. There was nothing to break the monotony of the cold, cheerless scene—all was bleak, cold, and forbidding. The long, leafless branches of the trees reached out their crooked arms, from which hung long pendants of solemn gray moss, like funereal garments waving to and fro over the dead and withered undergrowth. As far as the eye could reach, there was no habitation, no human creature visible. I had walked about four miles—it seemed ten to me—and had become so wearied that I feared I should fall; when I was suddenly and painfully reminded of the terrible dream which had so terrified me on the night following Judge Guinard's death. Again I felt the weary dragging of my feet, and heard his heavy tread keeping pace with mine. Again I felt his cold breath fanning my cheek, and his icy touch upon my wrist; and again those wailing sounds smote upon my ear, and distinctly the words, "poor child, poor child!" seemed to re-echo from every part of the desolate waste around me. Like a revelation from the dead, it flashed upon my mind. This, then, was the trouble of which the dying man had striven to warn me. He was my husband's friend; he knew his secrets, and he knew that he was going to abandon me; and when his tongue was already paralyzed by death, he had striven to frame the words which would have prepared me, at least, for the sorrow and trouble, which came upon me as suddenly as the lightning strikes the green tree in the meadow, and left me prostrate and helpless upon the earth.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

## MY HOPES ARE ALMOST BLIGHTED.

OVERCOME by my emotions, and almost hopeless, I believe I should have fallen to the ground in utter despair, when, to my great relief, I heard a horseman approaching.

As he advanced, he looked at me in surprise; and, checking his horse, at my entreating gesture, waited courteously for the question which trembled on my lips.

"I wish to go to Col. Hilton's—is this the right direction?"

"Why, Madame, you are a mile out of your way; you have taken the wrong road," he replied.

(I gathered the meaning of his words from his gestures.)

I was in despair. I trembled with excessive cold, and the racking pains of fatigue caused my knees to bend beneath me, and my poor arms to almost drop their precious burden; but no, I would not yield—physical pain should not subdue me. I had surmounted dangers of other kinds; and I thought, if, after placing my child in her father's arms, I dropped dead at his feet, my last thought should be a loving, thankful prayer to God for permitting me to perform a duty which I had taught myself to regard as a sacred one.

The stranger turned his horse's head, and saying: "Walk slowly, Madame, I will see what I can do for you;" galloped away, and was out of sight in a few minutes.

I walked on, but my fatigue increased every moment, as I retraced my weary steps, in order to regain the right road, when I saw a carriage approaching, with the gentleman on horseback riding beside it.

They stopped; and the stranger said, politely: "Madame, allow me to assist you into this carriage."

I gladly complied; and to my wondering, questioning gaze, he explained, that he had gone back to obtain for me some kind of a vehicle, but had met this one, which had been sent

after me by the lady at whose house I had passed the night. After I had left, her kind, womanly heart had taken compassion on me; and despite Col. Hilton's orders to the contrary, she had sent the carriage to overtake me, giving the driver directions to leave me at Col. Hilton's door. I thanked the stranger for his kind consideration, and breathed a prayer for the good woman, who, true to her own womanly instincts, could not see a fellow-being suffer, without an effort to relieve her.

We drove on and on, for some time, until we stopped at the entrance of a pleasant-looking country place. I saw a pretty, new, one-story, frame dwelling-house, about fifteen yards from the gate. There was a small building, old and dingy, an office, apparently, to the right of the main building. As the carriage stopped, a man appeared upon the gallery, and then came toward us. It was Col. Hilton. He advanced to the side of the carriage, and demanded in a loud, rough voice:

"What do you want?"

"I shrank back, frightened at first, by the cruel look in his eyes; but replied, in a firm voice: "I want to see my husband — my child's father."

He turned almost purple with passion as he roughly said: "He is gone!"

I screamed in despair, and sobbed violently; for I knew not what to do. He was evidently afraid that my screams would excite attention; for he looked anxiously about, and said, less harshly than before: "Here! get out, and come into the house."

He conducted me into the little office; and, as soon as the door was closed, I asked again: "Where is my husband — where has he gone? Tell me, for God's sake!"

It must have been the despairing accents of my voice, and my imploring gestures alone, that made him understand me; for he replied, in a feigned, sorrowful voice: "He is gone! I tell you, once and for all, he is gone; and you will never see him again."

I paced the room in silent agony. I placed little Fifine,

who was awake, though very quiet, upon the lounge, and stood gazing down upon her, the tears streaming from my eyes, asking myself the sad question: "What will become of you now, my darling?"

I looked around. Colonel Hilton was sitting beside a table, writing a letter, which he folded and handed to me, saying: "Go back to Yazoo City, and give this to Mr. Hobson. I have instructed him to take good care of you until I come. I will then talk further with you."

I refused the letter, saying: "I will not return to Yazoo until I have seen my husband. I know he is here."

He ground his teeth angrily, and turning to the table again, commenced writing; while I paced the room, stopping, ever and anon, to look through the window, which commanded a view of the house. As I did so, I saw the curtains of one of the windows drawn aside, and the pale, agitated face of Dr. Hilton, my husband, met my gaze. I screamed; the curtain was hastily dropped. Colonel Hilton caught me by the arm, and said, excitedly: "What is the matter?"

"My husband is here in that house; I saw him," I replied.

He darted upon me an angry, baffled look, and saying, "I will send him to you," left the room.

He soon returned, accompanied by Dr. Hilton, who, as soon as he saw me, stopped short, and pointed to the door, as if commanding me to depart. I saw at a glance, by the cringing, cowardly look upon his face, that he did this through fear of his father; and, knowing this, I was ready to forgive him, and implore him to come to me. Yet, as my thoughts took distinct shape, the unhappy conviction forced itself upon me, that my worst fears were true. I could deceive myself no longer. My love and devotion had all been wasted upon one who was false and unworthy. I reached out my arms to him, but his father still stood at the door watching us. I screamed aloud. The old man seemed alarmed, for he turned away; and Dr. Hilton came to me, and embraced me, holding me in an almost convulsive grasp. Then, taking little Fifine in his arms, he bent down his head over the little wondering face,

and kissed her again and again. I regarded them with a strange feeling. The moment so longed for had come at last; but was it as productive of joy and happiness as I had so fondly hoped? Alas! no; and as I thought, a pang of troubled pain shot through my heart, and a feeling of hatred and doubt took possession of me as I gazed upon the man who had vowed before God and the world to love and protect me; but who could, at the bidding, and through the fear of his tyrannical father, cruelly trample upon my heart's best feelings; crushing the joy from my youth, and the hope from my soul; heaping wrong and insult upon me, as he commanded me, his once loved and petted wife, to depart from his presence as if I had been a degraded and unworthy being. These thoughts rushed through my mind like a whirlwind; and yet, strange to say, a suspicion of the treachery, base and deep, which he and his black-hearted father were even then plotting against me, never occurred to me. I have seen proofs, since then, that the terrible wrongs which I have endured, the villainies he has remorselessly practised toward me, were deliberately premeditated even at that touching and dependent period of my life, when I was happy in the thought of becoming a mother, because *he* manifested so much delight and joy at the prospect before me.

Ah, how true it is, as the English Shakspeare says: "A man may smile, and smile, yet be a villain."

But I must not anticipate. I repeat, that, although the thoughts of his duplicity and cruelty rushed through my brain, their desolating ravages were not then felt; for I loved him still; and was ready, for the sake of that love, and for my child, to forgive all and forget all at one kind glance or gentle word. But to resume. He placed little Ffine again upon the lounge, and was turning away. I caught him by the hand, and cried: "Oh, my husband, have you no word for me?"

Colonel Hilton had entered the door; but as I was standing with my back toward him, I did not see him, and was surprised and pained at the sudden, violent movement with which Dr. Hilton flung my hand from him. My child began to cry;

not loudly and passionately as happy, well-cared-for children cry when something crosses their paths, but with a low, patient, pitiful wail, that would have brought the tears to the eyes of joyous, well-loved mothers. I took her in my arms, and said: "Dr. Hilton, our little baby is very hungry; will you give me some food for her?"

"Yes, Laure," he said; "I will send you something for her;" and he passed out, saying something to his father, as he did so.

My child was very cold; and as I rubbed her little feet, that seemed like blocks of marble in my hands, I begged Colonel Hilton to take me to a fire, where I could warm her.

He replied: "You have but ten minutes to remain here. You must go," and turning away he left the room. Dr. Hilton soon returned, bringing some milk and crackers for Ffine, and some wine for me. While I fed the child, Dr. Hilton knelt down on the hearth and succeeded in kindling a little blaze, and taking his child in his arms, he held her to the fire; and as the little thing began to feel the effects of the grateful warmth, she looked up in his face and smiled confidently. He was softened for the moment, and kissed her impulsively; then turning to me, said: "Laure, she looks like me!" and then he added, abruptly: "Laure, you must stay here no longer. This is not my house, you know; go back to Yazoo City, and I will come to you in a few days."

"Oh, I cannot go without you," I cried.

At this moment his father reappeared at the door, and said, "Tell her she must go;" and coming up to me, he seized me roughly by the arm, and said, "Answer me, Madame, will you go or not?"

I stretched out my hands imploringly, and cried: "I cannot go unless my husband goes with me."

Without reply, Colonel Hilton beckoned to some one outside of the door, and two huge negroes came into the room, and seizing me, despite my heart-rending shrieks to my husband, who calmly and indifferently looked on without an effort to prevent the cruel violence, they carried me out of the house, and flung me roughly into the carriage. I sat like one stupefied.



My child was thrown screaming into my lap; one of the negroes got into the carriage, the driver whipped up his horses, and before I could speak, we were driving along at a rapid rate. My cloak and shawls had been flung in after me, and my first thought was to wrap up my child from the cold. The violent jolting and pitching of the carriage, as it swayed from side to side in our rapid progress, excited me beyond endurance; and it was some time before I could fully realize my deplorable situation. When I did, my humiliation and anger completely overpowered me. I placed my hand upon the door, intending to spring out, for I was half crazed, when the negro flung me violently back upon the seat, and covered my mouth with his hand, to prevent my screams being heard.

At this moment, I saw a horseman approaching, and I struggled to attract his attention; but my cries were stifled. I waved my hand, but the negro threw himself before me, and clutched me by the throat, choking me with such violence that I almost lost consciousness, and I fell helplessly back. He released my throat from his murderous hand, but still kept my mouth covered. I endeavored to make him understand that he was smothering me — that I could not breathe, and prayed him to let me go; but, with horrid imprecations, he shook me savagely, and cried, in a coarse, guttural voice: "Behave! behave!"

He then took his hand from my mouth. I leaned toward the window, in order to inhale the fresh air. The negro, thinking that I was about to throw myself out, struck me a heavy blow between my shoulders, that nearly deprived me of breath; and another one on my mouth, loosening my teeth, cutting my lips, and making the blood flow down over the bosom of my dress in a stream. I sank down in utter exhaustion. All was dark. I felt that even God had forsaken me. My brain was confused and bewildered. I was forced to remain quiet, since I could not speak nor move. My little Fifi, thrown down on the floor of the carriage, never ceased to cry and moan, but, for once, I was deaf to the beloved voice. Thought and reason returned; and the more I thought, the more outraged

and indignant I became at the brutal treatment which I had received from the hands of this negro; which treatment was authorized, I had no doubt, by Colonel Hilton, if not by my husband himself. I was indignant at being compelled to remain in the same carriage with him; and his brutal, insolent countenance filled me with fear and disgust; and crazed with fright, I made another attempt, and this time succeeded in springing out. I fell heavily to the ground, the wheel of the carriage grazing my head severely, causing the blood to flow like rain. The negro jumped out, evidently frightened, for he did not curse nor beat me. He gathered some leaves, and tried to wipe the blood from my face, and then replaced me in the carriage. I made no further effort to release myself from his hateful presence. Just before entering Yazoo City, he sprang out, and shaking his fist at me, disappeared.

We drove up to the door of the hotel. Mrs. Hobson came out, but refused to receive me, saying I must be taken to the hospital. I knew not what to do. I was indeed a poor, pitiable-looking object. My face was swollen, discolored, and bleeding. My dress, in front, was soaked with blood; and I myself nearly stupefied, not knowing what to do, nor where to go. A crowd gathered about the carriage; and, bewildered as I was, I could read more of derision and mockery in their faces than sympathy and pity. Mrs. Vincent's little brother was passing; and seeing the number of people clustering around me, came, impelled by curiosity, to see what the matter was. He recognized me, and hastened to acquaint his sister with the fact of my having returned, and the condition I was in. She came to me immediately — oh, may God reward her! — and addressing herself to Mrs. Hobson, said:

"Oh, shame upon you, Madame! shame upon you! You persuaded this unhappy woman to go to Silver Creek; and now that she is in distress and grief in consequence of having followed your advice, you refuse to receive her. Oh, your heart is but a stone!" and ordering the driver to take me to her own house, she entered the carriage and soothed and comforted me with sweet, loving words.

Mr. Vincent sent at once for a physician. Dr. Wright came, bathed and dressed my wounds, and administered a sedative draught, under the influence of which I fell into a sound and dreamless slumber.

My readers may possibly think that there is much of exaggeration in the account I have given of the treatment which I received from my husband and Colonel Hilton, and from the hands of the brutal negro, who but executed their orders. On the contrary, I have softened and subdued the truth as much as possible. I could not paint it in all its deep, glaring colors; and many of the hideous details I have altogether suppressed. My pride has suffered much of humiliation in this recital, and my heart has been harrowed anew by the recollection of my wrongs; and every wound has seemed to re-open and bleed afresh. And I here solemnly affirm that I have "nought extenuated or set down in malice," but have uttered only the truth in all sincerity of heart and purpose.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### COURAGE I MUST HAVE.

THE day following the events narrated in the last chapter, I was so bruised and sore in spirit that I longed to die; and in body, so that I could not turn myself in bed.

Mrs. Vincent cared for me as lovingly and kindly as a mother or sister could have done; and my heart was full of gratitude toward her and her noble husband, who was a fitting mate for her in generosity and benevolence. Surely Heaven will reward them for all their kindness to me and my little helpless child; for from Heaven came the beautiful words: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." I can only render them the poor homage of a grateful heart, and the loving remembrance of my whole life.

After a few days, the negro who had treated me so brutally came into Mr. O'Donnell's, and Mr. Vincent caused him to be brought to my bedside. Said Mr. Vincent:

"Madame, do you recognize this man?"

"Yes, he is the same one who beat me," I replied, giving but one look at his sullen, dogged face.

"Do you know that lady, you scoundrel?" continued Mr. Vincent.

"Yes," said the man, in a loud insolent tone.

Mr. Vincent could restrain himself no longer, but rushing upon him, seized him by the throat, and shook him until his teeth chattered, saying as he did so:

"You black rascal, how dare you lay your hands upon a lady?"

"My master told me to do it if she did not behave," the man replied, cowering like a whipped hound before the angry, exciting gaze of Mr. Vincent, who again shook him violently; and was proceeding to inflict further punishment upon him, when I interfered, and begged for his release. He had only obeyed his master's orders, and if punishment was to be inflicted, it was not upon him, the poor, ignorant tool, that it should fall. I was confined to my bed for over a week, and then I began to improve slowly. I felt the necessity of leaving Mr. Vincent's as soon as I was sufficiently recovered, for their house was of limited dimensions; and I knew that they would make other use of the room I was occupying, if I were not there. When I was able to leave, Mr. Vincent procured a room for me at a boarding-house. I only remained there a week, however, for my wants were not attended to, and my room was neglected. While I was still there, however, a lady by the name of Mrs. Harmer, accompanied by her governess, Miss Shaw, came to see me, actuated by mixed motives of curiosity and kindness. Miss Shaw spoke French fluently, and we conversed a long time; Mrs. Harmer not taking any part in the conversation. I told them my pitiful story, and they expressed much sympathy for me, and petted and fondled my little child. They left me with a kind adieu, and

soon after their departure, a boy came with a large package for me, together with the following note from Mrs. Harmer's companion.

"DEAR MADAME:—Mrs. Harmer, who visited you this morning, sympathizes with all those who are in distress. She regards all that she possesses as not her own, but only lent her; so that she may relieve the sufferings of the unfortunate. She is an angel of goodness. She sends you some articles for yourself and babe, which she thinks it possible you may need, and begs you not to be offended at her offering them to you. She also bids me say, that her home is open to you at all times. Very truly yours, M. E. SHAW."

My reply was as follows:

"MADAME:—It gives me great happiness to be assured of the sympathy of so kind a lady as Mrs. Harmer, whose heart is opened, through the influence of God, to the lone and friendless stranger. I accept the package with thanks, as proof of her kindness, although I am well supplied with clothing. My mental distress, however, is extreme, and her precious sympathy is invaluable to me, and inspires me with fresh courage. I tender to her my warm and grateful thanks.

"Very respectfully yours, LAURE C. HILTON."

A few days after this, I rented a room in a small house, Mrs. Vincent giving me a lounge and a few other articles of furniture. The weather was extremely cold—my bed-clothing was scant. I had no means. I could not beg; I was unwilling to expose my poverty, and my poor little child and myself were reduced to the last extremity. We suffered with cold, and from the pangs of hunger.

Ah! the dreary, dreary days—how sad is their record. Cold and hunger stood side by side in my poor, little room, and I had no other companionship—their presence I could not leave, and the dull glare of their pale, dead eyes rested upon me by day and by night, and fell upon the wistful, pinched face of my darling, that grew whiter and thinner every day, until I feared that it would fade away forever from my sight.

At last my child fell ill with fever. I saw that she was starving—my pride gave way, and I implored aid from my neighbors. Some kind ladies sent me food, and I also obtained some sewing to do; but the payment for it was not sufficient to supply our necessities. Fifiue was dangerously ill; I feared she would die. Dr. Wright came to see her, and sent me proper remedies for her, but my condition was pitiable indeed. I had no blankets, no wood, no light. If my child had died at night, it would have been in utter darkness, and I could not have seen her face. I knew no one to whom to apply.

Mrs. Harmer had gone to New Orleans, and I felt ashamed to request aid the second time from the ladies who had assisted me before. My child was suffering, her eyes were turned imploringly toward me, with eager, questioning glances, as if to ask my help and succor; her lips were parched, and her little chest heaved and throbbed with panting, oppressed breath. I could endure it no longer; I sank upon my knees, beseeching God to send death in mercy to us; for I felt that I could rest sweetly in the grave with my little one clasped close to my bosom.

There was a knock at the door, and a negro entered, giving me a note from a friend, telling me that Dr. Hilton was in town, and at Mr. O'Donnell's store. I cannot express the joy and relief which I experienced at hearing this, for I thought that he would relieve our necessities, at least, if he would not come to see me. I seized a scrap of paper, the only one that I had, and wrote the following note.

"DR. HILTON:—My child is very ill—dying, it may be. I have no food, no fire, no light; and oh! it is so terrible to be alone in the dark night with my little, suffering child, and not be able to see her face. When she sleeps, I think she is dead, and wake her with my sobs. For the love of mercy, send me some money. I can endure all that I suffer—but your little child is helpless and sinless: have pity on her; she has never injured you, and she has already paid dearly and suffered much for the poor boon of existence, so cruelly thrust upon her. Help us, I implore you.

"One who is very desolate and friendless, but who was once  
*Votre petite LAURE.*"

This note was put into Dr. Hilton's own hand by the faithful negro, who had brought me the information of his presence in Yazoo; and, incredible as it may seem, as soon as he had read it, he mounted his horse, and returned to Silver Creek, vouchsafing no answer to my heart-broken petition.

I waited anxiously for a message from him, but none came. The negro returned, and told me that he had gone. I fainted in despair. The man was frightened, and ran for Dr. Wright, who, after attending to me, made my situation known to the ladies of Yazoo City, and before night, I was supplied with every necessity. Oh, how thankful I was! how gladly, trembling with very joy, I held to little Fifine's famishing lips the first spoonful of some nourishing soup; and how I wept, to see how greedily she drank it, and begged for more! I never shall forget, and the tears will start even now, as I remember the close clutch of her tiny fingers upon the spoon, and the eager, hungry look in her eyes, as she watched it in its rapid journeys to and from the bowl to her lips. There were several ladies who had come in, each to bring something, obeying the dictates of their generous hearts, and one of them sent a pang to my very soul by thoughtlessly saying:

"Madame, it would be a blessed thing for you if your child should die."

My little Fifine had a fierce struggle with death, who seemed loth to yield a victory to so frail and delicate a creature; but she finally recovered.

Oh! can I ever be sufficiently thankful to God for sparing her to me? Without her what would my poor life be worth—aimless and wretched, deprived of the only link that bound me to the past? All the hope inherent in my nature, all the courage, all the power of endurance that had hitherto sustained me, would have been completely crushed beneath this most cruel of all afflictions. I could not have borne it; and God, who measured my strength, spared me in his tender mercy.

The precious life of my child is all that makes life endurable. Any toil, any labor for her is a labor of the sweetest love; and she is the incentive to exertion, the cause that impels me to struggle above the miseries that have clung to me as the cold waves rush against and cling to the drowning bark.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### MY FIRST LABOR.

I REMAINED at this house nearly five months, struggling hard to support myself and child. I could pay the rent of but one room, which served for parlor, dining-room, kitchen, and bed-room. I could not always get work to do, and many days I went without food myself in order that my darling might have sufficient. In the meantime I heard nothing from Dr. Hilton, and I did not attempt to write to him or seek him. Mrs. Harmer proposed my moving to a more convenient location and commencing the business of dress-making. I knew very little of the mysteries of this calling, but being naturally very ingenious and quick with the needle, I soon acquired some knowledge of its various branches. I rented two rooms in a large brick building owned by a Mr. Wilson, a jeweller, whose store was in the lower part. There was also a large *salon* in the upper part of the building, which was used for balls, parties, concerts, &c.

I was very well pleased with my new location, the rooms being airy, pleasant, and secluded. I had not consulted any of my lady friends concerning my removal, from the fact that I did not wish to give unnecessary trouble to those who were so kind to me; but here I made a mistake. I had occupied my new domicile but a few days when there were grand preparations made for a large ball. The evening came; the *salon* and the adjoining rooms were brilliantly illuminated,

and crowded with the *élite* and fashion of Yazoo City, the ladies being arrayed in their most becoming attire. From a window in my room I gazed upon the animated scene; and, childlike, wished that I too could join the gay, joyous throng; forgetting for the time the unhappy circumstances of my present condition, and remembering only, that, once upon a time, I too had participated, with unmixed delight and mirth, in similar scenes of festivity in my own sunny France, and had been the idol of an admiring crowd.

Great tears gathered one by one in my eyes, and slowly dropped upon the head of my sleeping child as it nestled against my breast, and I bitterly thought of the cruel blight upon my young life. I was roused from these sad thoughts by the entrance of Mrs. Harmer, who came in radiant and blooming from the ball-room, bearing a large plate heaped high with the delicacies that weighed down the refreshment-table.

She had a lovely face; and her dark eyes beamed with excitement and pleasure. She was energetic and quick in her movements, and spoke rapidly and with emphasis. Her manner was always kind and courteous; and as she came hurriedly into my little room, I thought of the "sunshine in a shady place," and greeted her joyfully. After exchanging greetings, she said, in an earnest and emphatic voice:

"Madame, you have made a mistake in taking these rooms. This is a public-house, and the ladies cannot well come here to see you;" and she hurried away, leaving her remarks unexplained, and me utterly bewildered and frightened. In my ignorance I assigned a meaning to her words utterly foreign to their real significance, and I cried out loud in my dismay. Two gentlemen, who were passing through the hall, heard my affrighted exclamation, and came to my door to know what was the matter.

"Oh," I cried, "why did not the people tell me this was a public house? I did not know any better. They should have pitied my ignorance, and told me. What will Dr. Hilton think of me?"

One of the gentlemen understood me, and at once comprehended my mistake; and explained the real state of the case to me very satisfactorily.

This mistake of mine, ludicrous as it was, led to very happy results, of which I will soon speak.

The day following the ball, I was visited by a lady, who came in, and introducing herself to me, at once, without any preliminaries, plunged into the motive which brought her to my apartments. Her manner was extremely unpleasant, being abrupt and haughty. She was, she said, a friend of Dr. Hilton's; and proceeded to coolly and deliberately advise me to renounce all claims upon him, and molest him no more. She said if I would do this, I would have more friends, and receive much assistance that was now withheld from me; indeed, she herself would assist me in every way that it was possible for her to do.

My spirit rebelled against the insolence of her words, the proud, stiff bearing of her uplifted head, and the scorn expressed in the contemptuous curl of her lip. I drew myself up as haughtily, and though she towered above me in height, I still looked down upon her, with all the contempt I felt flashing from my eyes, and said:

"Madame, *you* have a husband now, in whose love and protection you are secure and happy, and cannot know how deep is a sorrow like mine; but you know not what will happen;" and as if impelled by the spirit of prophecy, I added: "But, mark my words, Madame, you will not die in your husband's arms. He will be living, but not near you, and will not come to you in your last moments." And turning away, I left the room, which I did not re-enter until she had taken her departure. In the course of my story, I shall have occasion to again refer to this lady.

Shortly after this, Col. Harris, a wealthy planter living on Silver Creek, came to Yazoo City. I had often heard Dr. Hilton speak of this gentleman, but I was not aware that any relationship existed between them. He heard of my distress, for I could not get work enough to do, to keep myself

and child from want, and kindly came to see me. He took my little Ffine in his arms, and pressing her to his breast, said, emphatically:

"Thank God, Dr. Hilton is not of my blood, but I am so unfortunate as to be related to him by marriage."

He stayed but a little while, and then left with a kind and friendly adieu. A few moments afterward a negro brought me a note, containing twenty dollars, and couched in the following words:

"MADAME:—The enclosed money is a small gift for your child. Do not be offended, but accept it with the kind wishes of a sincere friend."

There was no signature attached, but what need?

This money relieved my immediate wants, and came in an hour of deepest, direst need. It made me supremely happy to think that I had received kind words and aid from one who was evidently related to my husband.

Oh, how I wished it had been his father! "My God," I cried, "how much longer have I to wait?"

In the meantime, Mr. Hobson, who never neglected an opportunity of doing me a kindness, together with the two gentlemen who had come to my room the night of the ball, and whose sympathies were enlisted in my behalf ever since I had expressed myself as so much concerned at living in a public house, were interesting themselves in calling upon the principal citizens of Yazoo City, in order to raise a sufficient amount of money to enable them to rent and furnish a small house for me. They soon accomplished their benevolent object, and to my great delight and surprise, I was installed mistress of a tiny house containing three rooms, comfortably and prettily furnished.

During all this period, I never heard from Dr. Hilton, but I was informed, that whenever he came to town, it was always after night.

My new location was on Main Street, nearly opposite Mr. O'Donnell's; who, I have forgotten to mention, was a mer-

chant, with whom Dr. Hilton transacted business connected with the plantation; and consequently, whenever he came to town, he made his head-quarters there. Knowing this, I used to sit at my window with my sewing, watching wearily, but in vain, for his coming. Often I was deluded by seeing some one bearing a resemblance to the well-known, and alas, well-loved form; and my heart would flutter wildly in my breast, as I would lean eagerly forward, to watch the figure that I deemed to be his; until a close inspection would prove to me that my eyes had deceived my heart, and keen disappointment would take possession of me.

I was the recipient of many acts of kindness during these sad days, from many who were personally unknown to me, but which proved to me that my story was believed, and that I was no longer regarded as an impostor, or an adventuress. I will relate an instance of the generosity and benevolence thus exercised toward me. One day I discovered in my window a package; which, upon opening, I found to contain a beautiful piece of blue *barège*, together with a quantity of lovely narrow silk trimming. A scrap of paper, pinned upon the package, containing these words: "Not for you, Madame, but for your child."

There was no signature. A few days afterward, an envelope, addressed to me in the same handwriting, and containing a sum of money, was flung into my room through the open window; and this was repeated many times during the summer.

I did not know from whence came these liberal and generous donations; but an incident which transpired a short time after I had received the little dress, enabled me to form a surmise as to the identity of my unknown friend; but I was not certain for many years that this surmise was correct. My Ffine was a babe of sixteen months old at the time of which I am writing, and she is now nine years old; and it is only a few months ago that I ascertained the name of the kind, good man, whose noble heart prompted him to assist me in my need. He was a planter, living about fifteen miles from Yazoo City, who, becoming acquainted with my history, and also hearing

of my distress, and my efforts to support myself and child, took this delicate method of bestowing his charity upon me.

I was obliged to work very hard, and do my own cooking, washing, and ironing. The summer weather was hot and oppressive, and enervating in its effects; and I soon found that I was not equal to the labor I had to perform. I fell ill, and was confined to my bed for many days.

There was an old black woman living near me; and sending for her, I engaged her to attend to my room and to Fifi's wants during my illness.

One day, she had just finished dressing my child, and had placed her on the bed beside me, with her toys, when some one knocked; and the same lady whom I have mentioned as coming to see me, and advising me to renounce my husband, entered, accompanied by another and younger lady, whom she introduced as her niece.

They approached the bedside, and professed to sympathize with me, smoothing my hair, patting my cheeks, and saying to each other: "See what pretty hair she has, and what beautiful eyes!"

The elder lady especially was so affectionate in her manner, that I felt ready to forgive her for her insolent language on her previous visit. She remarked to her niece:

"Is he not a monster to abandon such a young, pretty creature?" and then looking at me, and smiling, she asked:

"Have you Dr. Hilton's picture?" and, upon my answering in the affirmative, said:

"Oh, please let us see it."

I rose from my bed, and unlocking my trunk, took the case containing it therefrom, and handed it to her. She opened it, and both ladies examining it, began to criticise it, and abuse the features.

"It is a bad face," they said. "There is a deceitful expression about the eyes," "an insincerity about the mouth," "the whole expression of the face is one of hypocrisy." These, and various other comments, caused an angry blush to suffuse my face; for, despite his cruel conduct to me, I could not endure

to hear the comments of others upon his behavior; and I said, in an indignant voice:

"Ladies, you forget that you are speaking of my husband — of my child's father."

They looked somewhat surprised; and, as if they thought they had been but expressing what they considered my own sentiments to be, the elder lady laid the picture upon the table behind her contemptuously. After lingering a few moments, they bade me adieu, and took their departure.

I lay quiet some time after they had gone, thinking of my husband, looking at my child, and comparing her features with her father's — for she strongly resembled him — and trying to discover where the bad traits were which they had discovered; and failing to find these traces on the innocent little face, I bethought me of my precious likeness, and rose to replace it in my trunk. It was gone! I looked around in bewilderment, searching every nook and corner of the room, but in vain; and, instinctively, I knew that one or the other of my late visitors had taken it away. Ill as I was, I ran out to the street, regardless of my *deshabille*, and inquired of a gentleman standing near my door if he had noticed the two ladies who had recently left my house, at the same time giving their names. He told me that they were in some of the dry-goods stores. I ran back to my room, and hastily dressing myself, and snatching up my veil, hurried out again, intending to confront them, and demand my treasure. Fortunately, I saw them in the street, some distance ahead of me. I sped after them as fast as my strength would permit, and overtook them just as they were about to turn the corner. A gentleman was with them — the husband of the elder lady. I was panting, and nearly breathless, when I stopped before them. They regarded me — the gentleman in astonishment, and the ladies in disdain, but visibly embarrassed. As soon as I could speak, I said:

"Madame, you have taken from me the likeness of my husband. You are dishonest. Return it to me, or I will have you arrested."



They made no answer, but looked at me in haughty contempt, and endeavored to pass on; but I approached the gentleman, and addressing myself to him, told him of their visit. He turned to his wife, and said a few words to her, which seemed to alarm her; for she thrust her hand into her pocket, and drew forth the picture, and handed it to me. I looked her full in the face, and inclining my head, as if in respect, said, uttering every word with a distinct, cutting tone:

"Madame, you are a lady, I suppose; but you are different from any lady I have ever met. In my country, gentlewomen do not rob the friendless and the unhappy;" and making her another profound bow, I hastened back to my room.

I was quite ill that night from the excitement and fatigue, for I was very weak; but the next day, although languid and weary, I forced myself to rise, and continue my work; for I could not afford to lose much time, as I had work to finish and send home.

I will state here the motive of these ladies for depriving me of my husband's picture, although I did not learn it myself for many years.

Dr. Hilton was at that time paying devoted attention to the young lady, which had culminated in an engagement. I know not what specious tales he had told her in regard to his connection with me; but after this interview, and my subsequent denunciation of her, she dismissed him, being fully convinced of his perfidy.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### THE RESIGNATION.

I HAD been living in my little house about four months, and was getting along very comfortably. The rent was regularly paid by the kind gentlemen who had undertaken to render me this assistance; and I was furnished by the ladies

with sewing enough to keep me fully employed. In fact, my circumstances were so far improved, that I was no longer under the necessity of performing the rough work about my house, but was able to hire a negro girl for that purpose. My life was quiet enough, and would have flowed on peacefully enough had my mind been at rest; free from the misery and mortification that was consuming me day by day, making my nights feverish and restless, paling my cheek and dimming my eyes; but with the thought of my darling child's future ever before me, knowing that she would have no one to care for her, or protect her, if I was taken away from her, and the wearying effects of the alternate fits of hope and despondency, that by turns sustained or depressed me, rendered my life a burden. Some days, hope would burn strongly within my heart, and I would give full scope to my imagination; picturing bright roseate visions of the coming time, when my husband, free and untrammelled, no longer subject to the despotic will of his cruel father, would hasten to me, and proudly and manfully acknowledge me as his lawful wife before all the world, and bestow upon his little neglected child the love and care which she had never known — the devotion of a fond, happy father.

Then again, in the long, still hours of the night, that gloomy time when the mind, influenced by the darkness, seizes upon the realities of life, and regards only the darker and colder shadows of the pictures that seemed so bright and glowing under the light of hope, sun-engendered and sun-inspired,— in those dark hours, oh, my child, it was for you I thought and suffered! I would say to myself: "Oh, my dear one, the time will come when I must give thee my last embrace, hold thee for the last time against my fond, faithful heart; and it may be that death will come before I have accomplished the sacred object for which I live; but thou wilt remember, love, forever, the struggles, the hardships, the poverty and temptations I have encountered in the youthful days of my life for thy sake, my daughter; and thy proud heart will swell with triumph, when thou rememberest how thy mother overcame every obstacle that arose in her path."

Thus I thought, and talked to myself, or my little child, who was my only companion; and so the days flew by, forming the weeks that left each their impress upon my brow, transforming me from a bright, rosy-cheeked girl into a pale, sad-looking woman. One day—a day never to be forgotten—Mr. O'Donnell sent me word privately, that my husband was at his store. I determined to go at once and make an effort to speak to him. I had learned by sad experience, that it was of no use to write to him; for he coolly disregarded every written appeal that I had made to him. I wanted him to come and see his child; his father was not with him, and I was sure he would listen to me. My eagerness and excitement mingled with harassing doubts and timid fears, and I was influenced alternately by hope that he would come to me, and distress lest he would not. I was almost wild at the thought.

I dressed my little Ffine in her pretty blue dress, thinking I would take her with me to plead for me; and after I had succeeded in making her look as lovely as a *petite ange*, in my own eyes, I placed her in her little chair, while I made my own toilette. When I was ready to go, with the inconsistency which is a characteristic of love, I resolved to leave my little one at home, hoping that I could prevail upon her father to come and see her. With my heart in my throat, and my cheeks blazing with hope and excitement, I sought my husband. He was sitting with Mr. O'Donnell, just within the open door of the store. I approached; they saw me. The other gentlemen, sitting around him, arose, but he kept his seat, glaring at me with angry eyes and scowling brow.

I stood before him, and with a trembling, imploring voice, said, while the tears started in my eyes:

"Dr. Hilton, will you not come and see your little child? It will do you no harm to come to her for once only. I will not ask you again. You have abandoned me, but she—" I paused—He hastily arose, and without speaking a word, struck me violently in the face.

"Oh, Dr. Hilton," I cried, "you did not mean that—say

you did not mean it." He ground his teeth, and his face was furious and livid with passion, and he struck me a fearful blow upon my cheek, with his cane, following it with another which felled me to the earth, and still another as I lay prostrate before him.

I raised my hands, pleading for mercy.

"Oh, no more, no more, for Heaven's sake!" I cried. "May God forgive you as I do, my husband!"

He looked down upon me, his face so transfigured with rage, that I should not have recognized it as the face of the man I had so loved.

This terrible scene occupied but a moment of time, transpiring so quickly, that no one had time to interfere; but almost instantaneously it seemed as if the whole street was crowded with people, some armed with bowie-knives, and some with pistols, and all uttering dreadful threats and imprecations, crying: "Shoot him, shoot him! kill the scoundrel! he has struck his wife, he has tried to kill his wife!"

I saw them lay hold of him, and I cried:

"Oh, gentlemen, do not hurt him, do not kill him; oh, have mercy!"

Mr. O'Donnell and the other gentlemen dragged him into the store, partly closing the door, leaving me outside; I flew in, and throwing my arms around him, and clinging to him, though he tried to thrust me away, I sobbed:

"Oh, Dr. Hilton, why do you treat me so? Do you want to kill me, and leave my poor child motherless as well as fatherless? Oh, if it were not for her, I would die at your feet. Your blows hurt my heart worse than my body. Oh! kill me, if you will, but for God's sake do not abandon and disgrace your innocent little child!"

He looked at me in such a manner, that Mr. O'Donnell seized and dragged me from him, saying:

"Madame, he will strike you again, he will kill you; he is beside himself with rage."

"Oh, no," I said, "he is sorry, I know—he did not mean it."

In the meantime, the crowd outside was becoming more and more exasperated, threatening to demolish the house, and demanding that he should make his appearance.

Mr. O'Donnell led me away. As I left him, I said:

"Oh, Dr. Hilton, you have hurt me, it is true; your blows struck deep, and their marks will never leave my soul, although they may disappear from the flesh,—but oh, my husband, you have hurt yourself far more than me;" and sorrowfully I went from him. During this whole scene he never spoke a word to me.

My face was terribly swollen, and my shoulder and arm became speedily discolored and very painful. As I entered my room, my courage failed me at the sight of my little one still sitting in her tiny chair, arrayed in her pretty blue dress, waiting for the father who would not come to her. She greeted me with a welcoming smile of delight at my return; and throwing myself on the floor beside her, I gave vent to my passionate grief. I was soon surrounded by kind sympathizing friends, who came in to see if aught could be done to alleviate my distress. Dr. Kidd, one of the best physicians in the city, and a true gentleman, also came in, voluntarily, and ordered a soothing wash for my sore and painful wounds, and a simple remedy for the fever that was already causing my blood to rush like fire through my veins.

My kind friend, Mrs. Harmer, never left my bed-side until long after midnight; but sat by me, and bathed my aching brow with her gentle hand, and strove to comfort me with sweet, consoling words. Oh, she was indeed a "ministering angel," whose mission here was all too soon fulfilled, for God called her home, and all who loved her, "and their name was legion," "wept because she was not;" but of her death I will speak in its proper place.

Early the next morning, Mrs. Harmer resumed her place by my bed-side; I was eagerly watching the house opposite, (Mr. O'Donnell's,) where I knew Dr. Hilton was, when Mrs. Harmer said:

"Madame, look at me. Do not look out of the window so much."

I closed my eyes, and tried to obey her by avoiding turning toward the window; but the tears forced themselves between the lids that could not crush them back; and, seeing this, she said, sweetly:

"My dear child, do not despair. There is a law of compensation and of retribution. God will watch over and protect you. Vengeance is His own; and you will be avenged."

Just as she said this, I saw Dr. Hilton coming out of the house, escorted by two policemen, who were conducting him to the office of the Mayor.

He saw me lying on my bed. I had raised myself slightly as he passed. He raised his cane—the same one with which he had struck me—and shook it at me vindictively. I sank back, and covered my face with my hands, for I could not bear to see him thus disgraced.

He gave bail for his appearance at the next session of the court, which was to be held in six months from that time, and then returned to Silver Creek.

Not many months had passed since his father had ordered his slaves to beat me—a poor, helpless young creature; and now the son, a worthy child of such a parent, had exceeded the example given him, and had not scrupled to raise his hand against the mother of his child.

I was desolate and heart-broken; a mother, and still a child; forsaken by the one, the tones of whose voice still echoed in my ear, calling upon the heavens to fall if he failed in his allegiance to me. Oh, my God! what could have changed him so suddenly?

I will dwell no longer upon this wretched time. Weeks and months went by. My child and myself were comfortable, as far as mere creature comforts were concerned. My fingers were ever busy with the work that brought us the "daily bread," wherewith life was sustained; and my brain grew weary with the plans and projects for my own and my child's future—grand "*chateaux en espagne*," that had, alas! no foundation in anything the present gave; but were based upon wild, vain dreams—dreams never to be realized.

## CHAPTER XL.

## THE MEETING.

IN a few months after the events described in the last chapter, Dr. Hilton went to Memphis, Tennessee. He left a message for me with Mr. O'Donnell, very ambiguously worded, but which I could construe but one way. It was, in fact, a tacit command to me to follow him.

I was at once elated with hope, and thought that perhaps he meant to provide a home for me and his child. My expectations led my heart no farther on the way to a happy future; for bitter disappointment had been my lot too often. I had long ago forgiven him for his cruelty toward me for my child's sake, not for his own. He left no money for me; and I was obliged to sell my furniture, in order to obtain the necessary means for my journey; and, as soon as my arrangements were complete, I left Yazoo City, taking the stage for Canton, Mississippi, and proceeding from thence to Memphis by the railroad. I arrived at the latter place at six o'clock in the evening, and was directed to the Worsham House, as being the best hotel in the city. While waiting in the reception-room for the clerk to provide me with an apartment, I carelessly looked out of the window, and saw, in a building opposite, a gentleman sitting, smoking a pipe, and with his feet upon the window-sill. This was a favorite position of Dr. Hilton's; and, although I could not see the gentleman's face, I knew, instinctively, that it was my husband.

As soon as my room was prepared for me, I dressed myself hastily; and placing my child in the care of one of the chambermaids, I threw a thick veil over my face, and went at once to his office, which I had no difficulty in finding. He had gone to supper. I waited patiently in the hall until he came. As he advanced toward me, he looked at me in some surprise and perplexity; then, as he recognized me, he said, with a smile and a quick grasp of the hand:

"Is this you, Laure?"

"Yes, Dr. Hilton," I replied. "Do you wish to see me?"

"I do, Laure," he said, with a pleasant look; and opening the door, he ushered me into a very comfortable room, nicely fitted up as an office.

He proceeded to light his lamp, which gave me time to collect my thoughts; for his kind reception, and evident pleasure at seeing me, bewildered and astonished me, for I certainly did not expect to be welcomed graciously. I was prepared for abuse and ill-treatment, but not for kindness. I chided my heart for softening toward him, but I was too ignorant and too innocent to attribute this warm welcome to any other motive than the one my poor heart craved; but the cause of this unexpected gentleness toward me will develop itself as I proceed.

After he had lit his lamp, he came and took my hand, and said, pleasantly: "Laure, where is your little girl?"

"She is at the hotel," I replied. "I did not know whether you would like to see her or not. Would you like to see her?"

"Yes; go and bring her to me," he said, shortly.

I was almost overwhelmed with joy, as I sped over to the hotel, and quickly returned, bearing my darling in my arms. Dr. Hilton did not offer to take her, or look at her. I was deeply mortified, and placing the little one upon the floor, I said, "Baby, this is your father; call papa."

She was just beginning to articulate a few words, and I had learned her to greet her father's likeness with a "good morning," and "good night, papa," every day. Of course, it was a mere form to her, who had never known a father, but it was a form always adhered to, and addressed to the inanimate picture, as in later years her prayers were addressed to the Blessed Virgin. She obeyed me at once, repeating the word after me in childish glee.

Dr. Hilton turned his back upon her, and said, abruptly, "I hate her!"

The tears rushed to my eyes; I took a step toward him, and said, "Do you hate me too, Dr. Hilton?"

"No; oh, no, Laure, I do not hate you; but she is the cause of all our trouble."

I did not—could not answer him. He looked at the child playing upon the floor, at first furtively, then steadily. During the conversation which followed, he never looked at me, but his gaze seemed fastened upon her; and she, her play suspended, as steadily regarded him, with her large black eyes.

It is not necessary to repeat our conversation—it was of no significance. He seemed embarrassed and excited, and more than once seemed about to say something of importance, but invariably hesitated, and substituted some meaningless words for those which had almost dropped from his lips.

As the evening grew late, and my baby became restless, I arose to return to the hotel. As if knowing, by intuition, that here was the original of her beloved picture, his little child said, "good night, papa," in sweet, loving tones. He did not heed her, and, humiliated by his utter indifference to my darling, I left the room, without a word of adieu.

He hurriedly followed me, saying, "Wait one moment, Laure. Will you come and see me to-morrow morning?"

"If you desire me to do so," I replied.

"Thank you, Laure, good night;" and without offering to accompany me to the hotel, although the hour was late, and the night dark, he re-entered his office, and closed the door.

I cared little for that; he had closed the door of his heart against me long before, and I laughed almost bitterly as alone and unattended I returned to the hotel, and accepted the act as the symbol of what I should have to expect for the rest of my life.

During the night, I alternately tossed upon my pillow, and paced the floor of my room; harassed with forebodings utterly indistinct, which I could not define—but which were strong enough to heighten the actual misery, the pain, and shame of my position. What new torture had fate in store for me? I felt a presentiment of the sacrifice about to be exacted of me, but I grew strong to resist, as I thought of my child, and

of her future. I had already been humiliated and degraded to the last degree; and oh! what had I done to deserve such a cruel fate? I had done nothing; I was innocent; I had striven to take care of the little child God had given to me; I had loved my husband with a wild devotion, that rose to the height of worship—and yet I had been beaten by a negro, and subjected to personal abuse of the most degrading kind, as though I were a very slave, from the father of my child; made the subject of public discussion, and brought to such bitter straits, that I was dependent upon charity for the poor means of sustaining life. Oh, could I ever forget?—no, never, while life lasted; but could I forgive? Ah, reader, if you have ever probed the depths of a woman's heart—a woman who loves—you will know how to answer this question.

## CHAPTER XII.

### I SAVE HIM.

THE next day at an early hour, with my child clinging to my hand, I entered Dr. Hilton's office. He was seated at his writing-desk. I trembled as I approached him; but he received me kindly, and, as I glanced shyly up into his face, I saw that his eyes were resting on me with an almost loving welcome. I was re-assured, but pained also; for he did not notice the child by word or look.

He bade me sit down; and drawing his chair close to mine, and taking my hand, and pressing it in his own, he said:

"Laure, we will have a long talk to-day. I have much to say to you;" and laying his head upon my shoulder, he continued: "Laure, I am a very unhappy man. I wish that I were dead!"

My heart filled with pity and my eyes with tears, as I responded, laying my hand softly upon his forehead: "Can I do anything for you, Dr. Hilton?"

"Laure," he said, again sighing deeply, "I know not how to talk to you, nor what to say. You are the dearest one upon earth to me, and yet I have outraged you almost beyond the endurance of woman to bear or to forgive. I was mad, Laure — mad and wild when I struck you that day. Oh, would that my hand had been paralyzed before it had been raised against you, my poor little Laure;" and his frame was convulsed with sobs that seemed the expression of the deepest agony. It is terrible to see a man sob. I could not speak, but mutely replied by a caressing movement of my hand upon his hair.

He continued, after a short pause: "Laure, you cannot imagine the misery — the anguish I have endured since that dreadful day. My remorse was great before, but, since then, I have suffered the tortures of hell! I tried to kill myself, but Mr. O'Donnell took my razor from me, and prevented the accomplishment of my purpose. It was no kindness in him; life is valueless to me. Oh, Laure, can you — will you forgive me?" and falling on his knees beside me, he buried his face upon my bosom, repeating the words:

"Forgive me, only forgive me." I could not bear to see him thus humiliated, and bidding him rise, I threw myself into his arms. He pressed me to his heart, as I said: "Oh, my husband, the past shall all be forgotten, and we will never speak of it again. We will only remember it as a hideous dream that made the night terrible. I love you as deeply and truly as when you first made me your wife; but, oh, you have scorned and slighted my love; it was valueless to you, and you have thrown it back upon my heart with loathing and scorn."

"Hush, Laure, hush! I cannot bear your reproaches, they are just, and I deserve them; but, oh, in mercy forbear. Laure, I have been the victim of circumstances. I will explain all to you. Only love me, Laure, forever, and bear with me."

I answered, slowly: "I cannot do otherwise than love you. The vow we took at the altar binds my heart in willing obedience. Oh, you are very dear to me! I will make any sacrifice for you. I would lay down my life, if it would only ensure your happiness."

"Laure," he said, hesitatingly, "there is one thing you can do for me; but, no, I have not the assurance to ask you."

"Tell me what it is? Do not fear — I will do anything in my power for you."

"Well, then, Laure, it is this: I would not ask it for my own sake alone, but for yours also. I know it would be repugnant to your delicacy of feeling to appear in court against me, would it not?"

"Oh, yes," I said: "I will not go. I will not testify against you — only tell me when it is to be, and I will refuse to go."

He embraced and thanked me. My vision of happiness again came back to me, slowly unfolding its beautiful illusions. I said:

"My husband, we will forget the past. Come let us go back to France, my own bright, sunny France — we were always happy there; and when its soft skies bend over us, and its perfumed breezes kiss your cheeks, you will love me as before, and tell me so in my own native tongue. I hate this cold, English speech; there is no love, no music in it. It is like the frozen regions of the frigid zone; it is my own beloved language that is the language of love. *Je puis mieux vous dire combien que je vous aime, en parlant ma belle langue.*"

"Laure, that is an idle dream. I could not support you and our child in France. I am dependent entirely upon my profession, or should be, if I went abroad with you, for my father would cast me off utterly; and you know, according to the laws of the medical fraternity in France, I could not enter into the practice of my profession for seven years. In the meantime, what could we do?"

"I can help you," I said. "I can give lessons in music. I can assist you in many ways."

"Oh, it is vain, worse than vain to talk of it," he replied. "Such happiness is not for us. It would hurt my pride too much to have my wife labor for our support, to have her perform even a part of the duty which should be mine alone."

I forbore telling him that his wife had labored for her support, and for his child, without assistance or remonstrance from

him. I used all the loving arguments which presented themselves in favor of our going abroad, but I saw it was in vain, and desisted with a sinking of the heart.

He then proposed a plan, which had evidently been nurtured to maturity in his own mind, that of taking a small house and going to house-keeping together, but still keeping the fact of our marriage secret until a few years had passed away, when his father would either be dead, or would, perhaps, become reconciled to our marriage. He urged this plan upon me coaxingly and persistently, and with many caresses, using specious and apparently excellent arguments in favor of it, saying: it would be but for a few years, and then all would be right. If his father should refuse to accord us his favor, he would probably be able to defy him, for he was sure of success in his profession.

My heavenly Father must have been watching over me; for it was not my own sense or judgment that preserved me from this snare. My loving heart was fast yielding to his tender approaches, his gentle arguments; but with the rapidity of lightning my mind grasped the future, and I said:

"Oh, Dr. Hilton, I cannot do this. I will wait patiently all these years, and will not trouble you; but I cannot live with you while you refuse to acknowledge me as your wife."

He started angrily from his chair, paced the room in an excited manner, and ground his teeth violently—a disagreeable habit of his, with which I was well conversant. I was not disconcerted. On the contrary, I felt fresh strength and readiness to oppose him; but it availed me not, as you will soon learn, dear reader, how cruelly I was misled and deceived.

He soon controlled himself, and with a loving pressure of the hand, said, as he re-seated himself by my side:

"Laure, you do not love me as you once did, or you would not hesitate to seize upon this chance of happiness which I offer you. It is our only chance, Laure; and you should do as I bid you."

I felt that I was on the point of yielding. No one can

fathom the depth of my love for him, and the contending emotions of my heart—love, pity, and devotion—struggling to gain the mastery. I struggled to speak.

"Dr. Hilton, I do love you only too well. I have sacrificed all for you; and I would yield all my own hopes, and endure the shame and reproach of the world for your sake; but I am not prepared to do anything that will darken my child's future."

"Curse the child!" he muttered between his teeth.

I shuddered. After a pause, during which he paced the floor hastily, he said:

"Very well, Laure; I have something else to ask of you. Will you sign a paper giving me a separation?" but before he could complete the sentence, I interrupted him, in dismay:

"Dr. Hilton, what do you mean? No, no! I will never sign such a paper."

"God of Heaven! Laure, do you not understand? Listen to me; it is only for two years. I am obliged to remain with my father for that length of time; but, after that, I shall be free, and we will go together to San Francisco, where I have an uncle who will assist me."

In reply to my repeated question, "Oh, why do you ask this?" he continued:

"It is only to exhibit to my father, to make him believe that you are willing to accede to his wishes."

"Oh, Dr. Hilton, how cruel your father is!"

"Yes, Laure, he is very cruel. He swears he will do nothing for me unless I separate from you. Come, Laure—come, my darling, you will do this for me; will you not? And then, in a short time, we shall be so happy."

I hesitated. I felt a strange presentiment; a childish fear took possession of me. I cried:

"Oh, Dr. Hilton, I cannot—I cannot! When you are free, perhaps you will marry some one else."

He laughed, scoffingly and angrily, and said: "You are so childish and ignorant, Laure. Our separation will only be for a short time; and I could not marry, if I would."



“Oh, I cannot — I cannot!” I still pleaded.

“Very well, Laure. There is one thing which I shall always exact from my wife, and which she must render me, or I will not call her wife. This is implicit, unquestioning obedience. This you have failed to give me. Your disobedience to my orders has been the cause of all our trouble. Had you remained in France, as a true and dutiful wife would have done, waiting until I sent for you, we should to-day have been united and happy. There is only one chance left for us. You have nearly ruined me by your wilful disregard of my wishes. Consent to sign this paper, and, after a time, all will be right. Refuse, and I will leave Memphis at once; and I swear that you will neither hear from me, nor see me, as long as you live.”

Oh, my God, I thought, what shall I do? I could not speak; I could not breathe; and, in angry tone, he added:

“If you have so little confidence in me, we had better not see each other again;” and taking his hat, he went toward the door. I stretched out my arms imploringly, and cried:

“Wait! let me think.”

He came back to me, and said: “Laure, you have never yet told me a falsehood. You say you love me. You have assured me of your forgiveness, and yet you refuse to do this simple thing, which will eventually ensure our happiness. I swear to you, I intend no harm to you. It will all be right.”

“How can I sign such a contract?” I asked. “I love you. I forgive you all — everything; but this paper I do not understand. I can not.” I knew I was making him furious with anger, as he said:

“Well, then, since you are so stubborn, I will leave you. You shall never see me again.”

“Oh, come back — come back; in mercy do not leave me!” His face beamed with smiles; he sat down beside me, and said:

“Laure, you will do this, I know; and we shall be so happy together, by-and-by, that you will never regret it. You have forgiven me for my brutality toward you, but I can never forgive myself. Come to-morrow, my Laure; there will be

some one here to read and translate to you the contract which I wish you to sign.”

I fell upon my knees, and said, with clasped hands: “Do not be angry with me, Dr. Hilton, I cannot decide — at least, not to-day; let me think it over to-night.”

“No, Laure; I must have your promise before you go away. It is a little thing I ask of you, and you refuse; where then is the love you profess for me?”

My heart throbbed painfully, as I placed my hand in his, and looking in his eyes, said, in a low, sad voice, “I promise.”

He caught me in his arms, and showered kisses upon my face, as he thanked me, and called me by the old, endearing pet names. He then said:

“Now, Laure, do not say anything about this to any one. In a little while, you must return to Yazoo City, to be there when the court is in session; when my case comes up, you can save me by not appearing against me. Mr. O'Donnell will advise you what to do when the time comes.”

I raised my precious darling in my arms, and left him. I was bewildered and exhausted.

And here let me ask pardon of my readers, for dragging them through this weary, sad scene. And yet, I can promise no scenes of gladness, for such have not thrown their radiant sunshine across my path. Grief and sorrow have been my portion, and I still look for happiness and joy, as I have been looking, ever since those happy days in my beautiful France, to the future — always to the future.

## CHAPTER XLII.

### THE SIGNING OF THE FATAL DIVORCE.

THE next morning, at the appointed hour, I went to Dr. Hilton's office; but as I entered, a strange foreboding came over me, and my reluctance to sign the paper returned

in all its force. I felt, however, that it was more than likely I should be compelled to sign it. My money was all gone, and my hotel expenses were still unpaid; and I was entirely dependent upon a man who could and would compel me to do as he wished, and who was disposed to take the utmost advantage of my helpless condition.

I found the office occupied by two gentlemen, who were strangers to me. I inquired for Dr. Hilton. One of them replied:

"He has gone out of town, Madame; will you not be seated?"

Mechanically, I accepted the offered chair, while he continued:

"You have an understanding with Dr. Hilton, Madame, in regard to a certain contract?"

"Yes, sir. Where is the contract?"

The gentlemen then introduced themselves as Judge Kennedy and Judge George, and, producing the document, read it aloud to me. It was in English, and of course I did not comprehend one-fourth of it; indeed, I could not gather the sense of it at all, but I had no suspicion of foul play. The fact of Dr. Hilton's absence was, however, an excuse for me to refuse to sign it. Judge George then said to me:

"Well, Madame, if you do not affix your signature to this paper, you will never see Dr. Hilton again. You know the understanding — the contract amounts to nothing; and I am compelled to say, Madame, that you are unreasonable."

My cheeks flushed with indignation. I replied: "I may be unreasonable, but in Dr. Hilton's absence, and ignorant as I am of the contents of that paper — for I do not understand your reading — I can not, will not sign it;" and bowing, I left the office.

Alas! it was but a short time before troubles overwhelmed me. Five or six days elapsed; I watched, and watched in vain for Dr. Hilton's return, but he came not. His office was closed, the sign taken down, and everything indicated a protracted absence.

The landlord of the hotel sent in his bill, with a peremptory notice to settle it, or give up my room. I was exposed to mortifications of all kinds — the cold words and sneers of the servants of the establishment, and the suspicions of the boarders. My days and nights were spent in anguish. At last, after many struggles, I concluded to go to Judge George, driven to the act by my unhappy necessities.

I thought that possibly my "obstinacy," as Dr. Hilton pronounced it, might be altogether uncalled for. Two years would soon pass away; and then, as he had promised me, pure, unalloyed happiness would be our portion; and then, too, my yielding would restore him to his father's favor. Surely I was wrong, and so I signed the contract.

Dr. Hilton's name was already appended — J. R. Hilton. Mine, Laure C. Hilton, followed; and then came the names of the two witnesses, Judge George, and Judge Kennedy. They gave me a copy of the document, and I returned to the hotel depressed and disheartened.

Dr. Hilton could not have been absent from the city, as they had informed me; for in half an hour he made his appearance, although he said he had just returned from the country. He expressed himself as much pleased with me; but I could not help comparing myself to a poor little caged bird that had bruised itself against the cruel wires of its prison-house in its vain efforts to fly away to the cool, green woods, and now lay, panting and exhausted, at the mercy of its captors.

Dr. Hilton also paid all my expenses at the hotel, and treated me with the kindest consideration. A few days passed away, when he told me that it was time for me to return to Yazoo City, and made all the necessary arrangements for me, placing me in charge of Judge George, who said:

"Madame, you shall travel on the finest boat on the river."

Nothing could exceed Dr. Hilton's kindness and politeness. It seemed as though he could not do enough for me, and I was as happy as I had before been miserable. He also took so much loving notice of his child that my cup of joy was

filled to overflowing, and I left him, completely ignorant as to the extent to which I had been outraged and deceived. When he bade me adieu, his manner was loving and tender; he promised me that he would come to Yazoo City as soon as the trial was over, and expressed much regret at parting with me for even that little time, and begged me to take good care of myself and Fifine; and said many other things of like import that made my heart as free and joyous as a child's. He supplied me with money sufficient for all present purposes, and promised to send me more; and, altogether, I was happy.

Nothing of importance occurred during the short trip. I arrived at Yazoo City, and, after securing my room at the hotel, took the earliest opportunity of seeking my beloved friend, Mrs. Harmer, anxious to tell her of my new happiness, and my joyful prospects for the future. I took my contract with me, for I knew that she would be interested in all that concerned me. As she read it, the tears filled her eyes, and she said:

"Oh, do you know what you have done? you have signed the articles of separation between yourself and your husband!"

"Oh, yes, Madame, I know it, but I had an understanding with Dr. Hilton—it amounts to nothing; he assured me that it did not," I repeated, seeing that she looked incredulously and pityingly upon me. I then tried to explain it to her, and added: "It is only one of the many sacrifices I am willing to make for him."

She clasped her hands and made no reply. I comprehended her manner, but I thought that after a little she would understand it all.

She approached me, and taking my hand, said, (I think that I still hear her sweet voice vibrating in my ear):

"Madame, leave the hotel and come to me: you shall have a home in my house; that which God has provided for me, you shall share."

I was almost speechless with emotion. She seemed like an angel to me, and I could have fallen at her feet and worshipped her, as I thanked her and accepted her benevolent

invitation, for my heart hungered for sweet womanly protection and sympathy; and the shelter of her pleasant home seemed like a very paradise—a haven of peace, where my poor, wandering heart might creep in, and be at rest.

I returned to the hotel, paid my bill, and had my baggage sent to Mrs. Harmer's, where I was soon installed in a pleasant little room.

After I was comfortably settled, my hostess came in, accompanied by Miss Shaw, whom I have mentioned before. This young lady was the governess, and could both speak and read French with facility.

Mrs. Harmer said, "Madame, would you not like to have that contract translated for you, literally?"

"Oh, thanks," I replied, "but it is scarcely necessary, for I almost know it word for word; Judge George explained it to me several times."

Miss Shaw opened it, and read it to me in French; and as she read, I was conscious of a total difference in the meaning of the words; and as she proceeded, I comprehended that I had signed a divorce, that I was no longer a wife, that I had yielded my claim to that holy name. My eyes grew dim, darkness obscured their vision, and I fell from my chair in a fainting fit, lying like one dead upon the floor.

When I recovered consciousness, Mrs. Harmer was bending over me, and attempted to comfort and console me. Her tears mingled with mine, as I gave utterance in broken sentences to every thought that assumed form in the chaos of my brain.

I gradually fell into a profound train of thoughts, and rehearsed again all the past over and over, but, strange to say, my mind weakly clung to those portions only, the memory of which inspired me with hope.

Oh, I thought, he would not deceive me, he was too earnest, too loving in his manner when he parted with me. He loves his child, too;—no, no, I must have faith in him, this contract is only to tranquillize his cruel father; I must have patience.

Suddenly, I conceived the idea of returning to Memphis, and at once announced my intention to Mrs. Harmer. She tried to dissuade me, but in vain; and I should have gone immediately if I had not fallen ill, and remained seriously indisposed for several days.

One morning I received a summons to attend the court, as Dr. Hilton's case was about to be tried. I was scarcely able to sit up, but I accompanied the bearer of the summons at once to the court-room. One of the lawyers met me, and politely greeting me, ushered me upon the stand.

"What do you require of me?" I asked.

He replied, "Madame, you are here to give in your testimony against your husband, who, six months ago, cruelly beat and abused you on the public street.

I remembered my promise to Dr. Hilton. I arose, and said, in the best English that I could command:

"Sir, I make no charge against my husband, I have nothing to complain of, no deposition to make."

He looked at me in astonishment, and asked me several questions, one of which was, "If Dr. Hilton had influenced me, or induced me to withdraw the charge?" I answered equivocally, and he dismissed me. I returned home, elated and happy in the thought that I had rendered a small service to my husband.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

### THE RETURN TO MEMPHIS.

SEVERAL weeks passed away. I heard nothing from Dr. Hilton; and I again began to consider the propriety of going to Memphis. I consulted Mrs. Harmer in reference to my going. She strongly advised me against fulfilling my intention; but seeing that I was unhappy, she withdrew her objections, and furnished me with money sufficient for the journey.

She wept freely when parting with me, and my sorrow was almost uncontrollable. It seems to me now as though I must have had a premonition that I should never look upon her sweet, gentle face again.

The stage-ride to Canton was very rough and fatiguing; and both my child and myself were well-nigh exhausted when we reached that place. We remained there but a few hours, and went on to Memphis.

I went, as on my previous visit to this city, to the Worsham House, but did not order a room, for I was penniless. From one of the windows of the reception-room, I looked over at Dr. Hilton's office. He was sitting, as before, in his favorite attitude. He saw, and recognized me. His face turned white; and I knew by the curling of his lip that he ground his teeth and cursed me. He closed his window, and drew down the curtain.

Taking my child in my arms, I crossed the street, entered the hall, and ascended the stairs, without meeting any one. Noiselessly I opened the door. He was at the window, peeping under the curtain, which he had drawn a little to one side for that purpose. With a muttered oath, he advanced furiously toward me, and demanded, "Why did you come back here, Madame? What do you want?" My heart shivered in my bosom. It seemed turning to ice; so cold, so angry was his manner, that I realized that the old trouble had returned in full force. I could not speak. Seeing my agitation, he handed me a chair, and assumed a gentler look. Gradually my courage returned, and I besought him to tell me if the contract I had signed was indeed a complete, a final separation?

"Forever, Madame! You are my wife no longer."

I threw myself in his arms; he repulsed me without a word. I looked in his face. It wore a look of determination, strong and relentless as death. I threw myself upon my knees, and pleaded, as one in danger of death pleads for life; tears streamed from my eyes, my hands were clasped in agony; pride was forgotten, everything, but the appalling fact that he whom I loved with the strength of my whole soul had

cruelly abandoned me and his little child, and at a moment, too, when he had lulled my doubts and fears to rest, and established in my breast a feeling of fancied security.

To my piteous appeals he said not a word, but spurning me as I knelt, left the room, and I was alone.

Pitiable indeed was my condition. I knew no one. I had no means. I was a stranger, with a little child in my arms, and with but little knowledge of the language. Had I told my story, who would have believed me? It was then about ten o'clock in the morning. I knew not where to go, so I remained in his office all day. I had nothing to eat; but I did not feel the pangs of hunger. I had a few crackers in my satchel, which quieted my child. Toward evening, Dr. Hilton sent one of his friends to me with this message:

"Madame, Dr. Hilton desires me to say to you, that if you wish to rent a furnished room, he will give you the means to do it. He, himself, intends to return to Yazoo City. He will not live in the same place with you."

"Sir," I answered, "I will not talk to you. I will not hear you. Tell Dr. Hilton to come to me."

"But, Madame, let me reason with you."

I pointed to the door, and turned my back upon him. He lingered a moment, and then took his departure.

It was night when Dr. Hilton came in. I was nearly exhausted with anguish and fatigue, and the weakness induced by want of food; my poor little one had cried herself to sleep in my arms. He came in, and stood for several moments looking down upon us. My eyes were inflamed with weeping, and my trembling arms could scarcely hold their burden. His heart must have yielded to an emotion of pity, for he said in a low voice:

"Laure, I do not wish to treat you badly, but my father is here." But the feeling was only momentary; for, going to the door and opening it, he said in a loud voice: "I am going to send a policeman to have you arrested, for you have no right to come about me."

The idea at once struck me, that his father was within

hearing. I fell upon my knees at his feet. "Oh, you will not be so cruel? for our child's sake, have a little mercy. His face was hard and stony as marble. He pushed me away from him with violence; and as I fell upon the floor, he left me. I was bewildered with trouble. Fifine was crying pitifully, begging for food, and lisping in her pretty way:

"*J'ai faim, maman.* I am hungry, mamma."

I realized that I must seek shelter somewhere for the night; but I knew not where to go. I went to the Worsham House, but Dr. Hilton had been there before me, and informed the proprietors, that he would not be responsible for my debts. He also represented me to them as an abandoned woman.

They refused to receive me. I went to several boarding-houses, but my sad face, tear-swollen eyes, and otherwise distressed appearance, together with the lateness of the hour, created suspicion; and all refused me shelter. My oft-repeated explanations were not listened to, because it was difficult for any one to understand me. I could not pass the night in the streets; so, wearied and hopeless, I returned to Dr. Hilton's office. I cannot describe the wretchedness of this night. Poor, little Fifine, restless, and crying for food, together with my own fearful thoughts, well-nigh deranged my intellect; and I felt as though the burning touch of insanity was pressing upon my brain. Did Dr. Hilton wish to force me to commit self-destruction? Oh, my God, the temptation was a fearful one; but my child smiled up at me with her sweet, innocent face, smiled between her tears, as she asked me for the food which I could not give her; and for her I determined to live — for her sake I would not die — unless God, in his mercy, should take my life from me with his own hand. The earliest dawn of morning found me weak and famishing; I had not tasted food since my arrival at Memphis, and my mental agitation had been so extreme, that I was very much in need of nourishment. I thought of my kind friend, Mrs. Harmer; of Mrs. Wolfe, who had begged me to write to her if I needed assistance; of Dr. Ross, my child's godfather, who would surely come to me, if he knew of my distress.

Oh, where was he? I thought of other friends; but of what avail? they were all too far away to aid me now, and my present necessities weighed me down. I must have food for my child. I could starve, but she must suffer no longer. I must beg. Hastily re-adjusting my clothes, after laying Fifine down upon the floor in a troubled sleep, I was about to go out in search of food, when, upon opening the door, I found myself in the presence of two policemen, who had been sent, they said, to arrest me. Weak and trembling, I sank upon my knees, and besought them to have pity. God bless their noble hearts! They could scarcely comprehend me, but they had mercy. They looked at each other, and one of them said, loud enough for me to hear him:

"I would rather cut off my hand than arrest this lady."

The other replied:

"So would I. Let's have nothing to do with it, John." I gave them to understand, that my child and myself were almost starving; and Fifine, awakened by the sound of the strange voices, began to cry feebly, and stretched out her little arms to me to be taken up. I lifted her from the floor, and one of these kind men, unperceived by me, took up her tiny hand, and pressed a five-dollar gold-piece in it; and respectfully bidding me "good-morning," they both left me. Fifine held the gold-piece up to me, drawing my attention to it by saying:

"*Joli, joli, maman.*"

I was still standing where they had left me, cut to the very soul by this last outrage of Dr. Hilton, when my astonished gaze fell upon the welcome coin.

With Fifine in my arms, I sped to the nearest baker's, and procuring some bread and milk, fed it to my famishing child, and devoured some myself, with the avidity that only those can know who have fasted as I had done. Grateful tears fell over the humble meal, as I mentally prayed to God to restore to the noble-hearted man, whose heart had softened with pity at the sight of my misery, the charity he had bestowed upon me, multiplied by an hundred-fold.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

### THE ATTEMPTED MURDER.

WHEN our simple breakfast was over, I returned to the office. In a little while, Dr. Hilton made his appearance. I asked him if he had sent the policemen to arrest me.

He seemed astonished, and pretended ignorance, saying that it must have been done by his father's orders. He then closed the door and windows, and made me sit down beside him. He took his cane, and showing it to me, said, between his closed teeth:

"I can, and will kill you with this; I have borne enough."

I looked in his face; he was smiling — I felt no alarm.

"Kill me with that cane, Dr. Hilton? oh, no, you can not; it is too small."

"I can kill you with this!" he shouted, showing me the loaded end of the cane; and then, dropping it, he seized me violently by the throat, and choking me until I was breathless and almost suffocated, swore that he would murder me and my child, and then kill himself. His whole frame was convulsed with passion, his face was livid as death, his eyes glared with a ferocious gleam that made me shudder with horror and dismay. I screamed with fright and pain, and struggled to free myself from his frenzied grasp.

There was a hurried tramping of feet, the door was burst open, and in a second the room was filled with men.

Dr. Hilton, probably in fear for his own safety, jumped from the window, and made his escape. It was a wonder that he was not killed, or that some of his limbs were not broken; for his room was on the second floor, and consequently his leap was a dangerous one.

The crowd, after vainly endeavoring to glean information from me as to what had occurred, (for they could understand

little or nothing of my speech, save that he had tried to strangle me,) soon dispersed, and quiet was again restored.

I learned afterward that he had gone to the office of the nearest magistrate, and laughingly related the circumstance, saying that it was only intended for a joke, and to frighten me. I saw no more of him that day; and through the long hours of the day, and the weary night that followed, my little Ffine and I remained at the office.

The next morning I was taken before a magistrate, whose name was Richards. Dr. Hilton was already there. He looked perfectly unconcerned and *nonchalant*, swinging his cane, and talking gayly with several of his friends. Squire Richards questioned me:

"What violence did Dr. Hilton offer you, Madame?"

I answered, that he had taken me by the throat, and strangled me, so that I could scarcely breathe.

"Do you think he intended to murder you, Madame?"

"At first I thought so—he trembled so. His lips turned white, and I was very much frightened; but when I screamed, he let me go."

I glanced toward him. He gave me such an appealing look, that my heart melted. Oh, Heaven! how I loved him. For one tender, one pleasant look, I forgave him all. My determination was taken, and I continued:

"I think, in fact I have no doubt, that it was only intended for a joke. I was very foolish to scream. I have no complaint to make."

The office was crowded with gentlemen and policemen. They were all very much excited, and all talked together in an eager, vehement manner; but I could not understand them. Dr. Hilton was made to pay a fine, and the case was dismissed.

As he left the room, he glanced back at me with a look full of malignant feeling. An instantaneous pain shot through my heart. I was about to follow, when Squire Richards said, in a kind voice:

"Remain, Madame Hilton."

I thought, at first, as there were several policemen still lingering in the room, that he was going to send me to jail. I did not know what they were going to do with me. I almost fainted with alarm, and repeated:

"Oh, I have done nothing. I am innocent. Have pity on me for my child's sake;" and besought him to listen to me.

"Squire Richards placed me in a chair, and, re-assuring me, said:

"You have no cause for alarm, Madame. I only bade you remain in order to hear your story."

I told him as much as I could make him understand, which was a difficult matter. He evinced much commiseration for me, and said:

"Have you a home, Madame?" I burst into tears, and said:

"Oh, sir, I have no home—no friends."

"Well, Madame, you shall have a home!" And this kind, good man, whom God had sent to befriend me in my wretchedness, bade his clerk take me to the Commercial Hotel, recommending me to the care of the proprietors, and becoming responsible for the payment of my board.

I had scarcely taken possession of my room when I became seriously ill, and for three weeks was unable to lift my head from the pillow. I received all the attention an invalid required—careful nursing, and the attendance of an excellent physician, being secured through the unexampled benevolence of Squire Richards. What reward does not this noble act of this good man merit? I was a stranger to him, with no claim upon him. He did not even know whether I was worthy—whether I was a proper object upon which to bestow charity or not; and yet he did everything for me that the kindest friend could have done; and this despite the falsehoods Dr. Hilton was industriously circulating about me.

The ladies boarding at the hotel came often to my room. One day, during my convalescence, two or three ladies were gathered about my bed, and discussing Dr. Hilton.

One of them remarked that she had heard a rumor, to the



effect that Dr. Hilton was soon to be married to a lady, a resident of Jackson, Mississippi.

Oh, I thought I deemed that Fate had dealt her unkindest blow; but, by the pang that shot through my heart, I realized that there was one more drop of bitterness that could be added to my cup of sorrow. I determined to go at once, and learn from his own lips the truth concerning this rumor. As soon, therefore, as I was left alone, I arose, and dressed myself; and, weak as I was, I went at once to his office, leading little Ffine by the hand. When he saw me, he sprang from his chair, with a horrible oath, and came toward me. The expression of his face was fearful. He roughly caught me by the shoulders, and attempted to thrust me from the room. I succeeded in releasing myself from his grasp, and leaning against the frame of the door, in order to support myself, I looked him steadily in the face, and said to him, although my voice shook with the sobs that struggled through it:

Dr. Hilton, you have taken everything from me that I most value — everything but my child and my life; and God knows you have rendered that worthless. Take that too. I do not fear death. It will be the most merciful deed that you can now perform to kill me." He withdrew his grasp from my arm; and then, without speaking, pulled me down upon the sofa beside him. Silence reigned between us for a few moments, broken only by my sobs. At last I said:

"Will you not tell me, Dr. Hilton, the reason of your cruel treatment? Is it because I am your wife — the mother of your child, and you wish to be rid of me, in order that you may be free to wed another?"

He made no reply. I continued:

"I have heard to-day, that it is the common talk, current in Memphis, that you are soon to be married to a young lady in Jackson. Tell me the truth. Be candid with me. Is this so?"

He turned as pale as death, and tried to speak, but could not. I went on, almost desperate in my agony:

"You are not legally separated from me, and you have no

right to marry again. You forced me to sign that paper, when I knew nothing of its contents. You misrepresented them to me. I trusted you, and you deceived me."

"Well, what of that? What can you do about it?"

The tone of his voice, and his exultant manner, stung me to the quick, and I replied impulsively:

"I will bring you before the criminal court for falsely swearing to me when you obtained my signature to that divorce. I am ignorant, but I know that it is not legal, obtained in such a manner; and if that does not prevent your marrying another, I will kill both you and the woman you make your wife."

He ground his teeth, and glared at me with the ferocity of a tiger.

"Yes, Dr. Hilton, I have abandoned all for you. I have lost all for you; and I am desperate enough to sacrifice my life for you; but it shall be through yours, and the life of the woman you marry, that I yield mine."

He was now so furious that he caught his cane, and swore he would kill me with it.

I cared nothing for the threat. I no longer feared him. I even, at that moment, took a strange pleasure in irritating him.

"Well," said I, "what then? If you kill me, what will become of your — of our child?"

Any allusion to his child rendered his anger more fierce.

"I wish you were both dead," he muttered; and springing up, he caught me, and dragged me to the door. I screamed; he grasped my throat, and tried to choke me. Poor little Ffine cried:

"Oh, papa, do not hurt *ma maman!*"

He caught her up, and threw her violently into the hall, and then pushed me after her; I fell into the hall, but with my feet still inside the doorway. Unheeding this, he shut the door heavily upon them. I fainted. When consciousness returned, I found myself lying upon a lounge in Judge George's room, whither I had been carried. My little Ffine was beside me, crying piteously, "*Ma maman, ma maman!*"

A carriage was sent for, and by the advice of the Judge, I was conducted to a private boarding-house, which was more quiet than the hotel, and less expensive. My feet were very much swollen and discolored, and gave me great pain.

The next morning, the Chief of Police came to inquire if I desired to prosecute Dr. Hilton for his shameful treatment of me. I told him, No, I wished nothing of the kind; I had no complaint to make. This was the third time, as my readers may remember, that I had thus saved him from prosecution.

For several days I was unable to walk, or even step; but as soon as I was able to move about a little, I went again to Dr. Hilton's office.

Doubtless, dear reader, you will think me devoid of spirit, in going to him again, after all that had occurred. Alas, I knew no better; the only experience that had been mine was one of suffering, and, moreover, I and my little child were wholly dependent upon him for support. I was so young, being not yet eighteen years old — an age when almost all girls are still at home by their mother's side, or lingering, perhaps, in the classic shades of study and romance.

I was determined to have an understanding with Dr. Hilton, in regard to the future of my child and myself. I was so ignorant, I could not understand that we were separated forever. I thought that we still had a claim upon him for support and protection. I thought, "I will make one more attempt to soften his heart — perhaps he will take pity on us."

He was reclining upon the sofa, and I approached him with a feeling of timidity and fear; for, alas! I had learned to fear his violence. To my surprise, he held out his hand, and said in a kind voice, but reproachfully:

"Laure, why do you come here so often? Do you not know that you no longer have a right to do so? Cannot you comprehend that we are separated forever?"

"No, Dr. Hilton. I do not believe — I do not feel that we are. I cannot part from you. I love you still! — better than life itself. Oh, why did you force me to sign that cruel paper?"

Fool! — fool that I was! But, oh, I was friendless and penniless, and knew not where to go with my little child."

I threw myself into his arms; my bosom torn with anguish and despair.

"Oh," I cried, "if it would please God to let me die here on your breast! Surely I have suffered enough to deserve this poor boon at His hands."

"Laure," he said. "Laure, it is hard for me to be forced to treat you so cruelly. You know — your heart tells you I love you still; and fate alone has placed us in this sad condition. You know you are, and always will be, dear to me; don't you, Laure?" and drawing me closer to him, he pressed my head upon his breast.

We sat thus in silence, listening to the quickened beatings of our hearts, and the sweet, innocent prattle of our little Fifi, who was playing upon the carpet.

I yielded to the happiness of being caressed by him once more, transient though I knew it to be; for I had an object to gain, and I hesitated, fearing to mar the fulfillment of my plan by over haste. Ah! I was growing politic. Timidly, at length, I broke the silence by saying:

"Dr. Hilton, I am thinking of a subject very near and dear to me. Do you wish to know what it is?"

"Yes, Laure; tell me."

"I am thinking of the uncertain future of that dear child; the only thing on earth that keeps me from taking my own life. Oh, God! I fear that the consuming misery in my heart will wear away my life, and I shall die, and leave her helpless and unprotected. Oh, what will become of her?"

"Do not be afraid, Laure; I will protect her, and see that she is well cared for," Dr. Hilton said, with quickened speech and breathing hard as he spoke. He continued:

"Laure, I want the child. You must give her to me now."

"Give you my child!" I repeated. "No, no; a thousand times no! Dr. Hilton, you shall never have her as long as I live."

From the energy with which he had spoken, I was con-

vinced that this was not a new subject to him; that he had given it thought and consideration before. This was a new terror to me—one which I had never feared. Dr. Hilton had always expressed so much anger at the very mention of his child; had cursed her, and wished her dead so often, that I never, for a moment, dreamed that he could desire the possession of her. What were his motives? Not love for her, certainly. To inflict still greater misery upon me? to drive me mad? to force me to the very verge of desperation, until I took the leap of the suicide?

While these thoughts were whirling through my brain, Dr. Hilton renewed the subject.

"Are you not aware, Laure, that I can take her just when I please? She no longer belongs to you. She is mine. When a husband and wife are divorced, the husband alone holds the right to claim the children."

"Oh, my God!" I cried, terrified and stricken. "Do not take my child from me. I will do anything in this world for you; I will go away, and never trouble you again; but do not crush the life and light still lingering in my heart, while the unwilling breath stays in my body!" and I sank at his feet, sobbing in very abandonment of grief.

He left me lying on the floor, and paced the room. I became quiet, and glanced at him furtively. A new determination seemed to be dawning in his face—a new resolution, to fulfil which, he deemed it necessary to bear with me. At last he said:

"Laure, it is best for you to go home now. Think of what I have said to you. I want the child; and I can protect, and care for her better than you can. You will then be unencumbered, and can return to Paris to your sister. You are young yet; and you will forget, and be happy. All the dark portion of your life, connected with me, will seem to you like an ugly dream; and if you will give Fifi to me, you will have nothing to remind you of the unhappy past. Think of what I say to you, Laure, and write to me. Do not come here any more."

"Well, Dr. Hilton, I will leave you to-day; but before I go, hear me swear, that by all my hopes of heaven, you shall never have my little child, unless you take her from my dead arms. If you steal her from me, I will find her; you cannot hide her in any place on this broad earth to which my love will not instinctively guide my steps. I do not wish to return to Paris, and forget you. I love you too well. I am a Catholic; and my religion teaches me that I am your wife, and you are my husband, as long as we both live. The vows I took upon me at the altar were for life, and I cannot unsay them, nor forswear them;" and gathering my child close to my heart, I left the room and returned to my boarding-place. The excitement, and the new terror that was now hourly inflicting its sharp stings upon me, were more than my over-wrought brain could bear, and I became very ill with brain fever. My landlady, Mrs. Byrne, finding that I had no money, and not being able, herself, to provide me with the necessary restoratives, or send for a physician, wrote to Dr. Hilton of my condition, telling him that I was lying unconscious, and she feared that I was dying; that she could not take the responsibility of providing medical attendance, for she had not the means to pay a physician.

Dr. Hilton was evidently conscience-smitten and alarmed. He went at once to Dr. Tucker, one of the leading men in the medical profession, and directed him to come to me immediately, and to order Mrs. Byrne to furnish me with everything that I needed. The doctor told me afterward that he had never seen any one more completely a prey to the pangs of remorse than was Dr. Hilton at that time. When giving Dr. Tucker instructions in regard to me, he said, repeatedly: "Oh, I have killed my little Laure. I have murdered her. I am the greatest villain on earth!" with many other expressions of the same kind.

But his remorse was short-lived; for when I began to recover, his hatred of me seemed to increase; but I anticipate.

For two weeks I was utterly unable to take *connaissance* of anything that passed around me; but as my wandering thoughts

began to return to me, and life and its cares again became realities, I remembered at first, dimly, as though I had dreamed it, and then vividly, as my power of thought grew stronger, Dr. Hilton's cruel threat of taking my child from me. As I distinctly realized, for the first time since my illness, that this threat was an actual fact, I lifted my head from the pillow, and looked about the room for Fifine; a dreadful fear filling my heart, as I tried to remember when she had been last at my bedside. My child was not in the room. Feebly I called to Mrs. Byrne, who was in an adjoining apartment. She came at once. I said: "Mrs. Byrne, where is my little girl? Is she with you?" The good woman looked troubled, and answered hesitatingly:

"No, Madame, she is not with me. We feared that she would disturb you while you were so ill, and so — and so —"

"Where is she?" I interrupted. "Tell me quickly!"

"Oh, be quiet, Madame, do — there's a dear, you'll make yourself ill again. Oh dear, oh dear, whatever shall I do!" and she rocked back and forth in her chair in evident fright and distress of mind.

Thought grasped at once the reality of the case. Dr. Hilton had fulfilled his threat, and taken my child from me. Calm and tranquil from very desperation, the strength of fever coursing through my veins, I said: "Mrs. Byrne, do not be afraid to tell me what has happened. I know it all. My husband has taken Fifine away from me. Tell me all about it, when, and how did it happen?"

In disconnected, disjointed sentences, fearing to excite me, and "bring back a relapse," as she graphically expressed it, the good woman told me the facts of my child's abduction, which were these: About a week before, as little Fifine was playing about the doorway, a negro woman had enticed her to the street, with some fine oranges, of which fruit the child was very fond. As soon as she was near enough, the woman seized her and ran with all her might down the street.

Mrs. Byrne came to the door in time to see her disappear around the corner, and was told by some children playing

near the door, of the means employed to entice her away. Mrs. Byrne at once understood that her father had taken this method of getting the child into his own possession; and not knowing what course to pursue, concluded to let the matter alone until my recovery; when, she felt certain, I would lose no time in reclaiming my own. I had, however, asked her for the child before she was prepared for the question, and she hesitated at telling me the truth, fearing its effects upon me, in my weakened condition.

The knowledge of my child's abduction was a terrible blow to me. I determined to remain as quiet as possible, until I was able to go to Dr. Hilton, and demand the restoration of my treasure; but it was some days before my strength returned, and two weeks more had elapsed before I could go out. At the expiration of that time, I again sought Dr. Hilton's office. He was surprised at seeing me, and his countenance expressed sympathy and pity for me, as he drew a chair forward, and kindly seated me in it.

"Dr. Hilton," I said, "where is my child? what have you done with her?"

"She is where she is well taken care of, Laure," he replied, "but where you cannot find her."

"Wherever she is, I will find her," I cried. "Oh, was it wise, was it well, to steal my only treasure from me, while I was lying ill and unconscious? How could you be so cruel, so hard-hearted toward me? Will you not give her back to me, Dr. Hilton? Oh, I will bless you all the days of my life if you will only restore my darling to me."

"Laure," Dr. Hilton said, in a cold and bitter tone, "it is useless for us to discuss this subject. I have taken your child because you were not a fit person to take care of her, and she is much better off where I have placed her, than she was when in your possession. As for you, I never want to see you again. I hate you — do you hear? I hate you! You have plunged me into trouble with my father, and with all of my friends; you are the bane of my life; and now that I am divorced from you, I do not intend to be annoyed by you any

more. And I may as well tell you now, that I intend to marry again, the very first opportunity that I have. But I will make you one promise; your child shall be well cared for, and never know sorrow or suffering, if it is in my power to prevent it."

"Oh, Dr. Hilton, do not be so cruel to me. I am not to blame for anything that has happened. I have tried to do right. Oh, in mercy tell me, where is my child? I will go away, and never trouble you again, if you will but give me back my child! I cannot live without her."

To my piteous appeal he turned a deaf ear, and saying: "I will not be annoyed in this manner; if you do not cease your complaints, and your visits here, I will have you arrested;" he was gone.

I tried to follow him, and made an effort to go down stairs, in order to return to Mrs. Byrne's, but I was so weak that I could not walk; and weary, and faint, my heart nearly rent in twain by the conflict of the various emotions that possessed it, I returned to the office, and sinking down upon the sofa, remained there all that wretched night, unable to move, and unconscious of aught save the fact that my child was gone, irrecoverably, unless my own intuition would guide me to the spot where she was secreted. I knew no human aid would be given to me — for was I not friendless? Alone, and unaided, therefore, I must fight the battle; the issue of which would be, my own death, or the restoration of my darling to my arms.

## CHAPTER XLV.

### I AM ARRESTED ON THE PLEA OF BEING CRAZY.

AT an early hour the next morning, there was a rap at the door. I ran to open it, thinking only of Dr. Hilton, when I found myself rudely seized by two policemen, who dragged

me down the stairs, heedless of my cries, and thrust me roughly into a carriage.

A crowd gathered around, and demanded to know the cause of the disturbance. One of my captors answered:

"Oh, it is nothing — only a crazy woman we are taking to the asylum;" and the carriage whirled away before I had time to make any appeal.

I asked the policemen, "by whose orders I was arrested?" They paid no attention to me, and I said: "Can you not see that I am no more crazy than you are? I am perfectly sane."

One of them answered in a jeering tone:

"Oh, yes, we are used to that, but it won't go down with us. Our orders were to take you to the asylum whether or no, that you was one of the worst sort of crazy." And he laughed as if he had given utterance to a capital joke, and turning to his companion continued:

"One need only look at her eyes to know that she is crazy. They glare at me as if they would burn me."

"I wish they had that power," I cried, regardless as to what they might think; and looking desperate enough to confirm any one in the belief that I was indeed insane.

We arrived at last, after driving some distance, at the gateway of a large enclosure, wherein stood a large, massive building, that had the appearance of a gloomy prison. Talking together by the gate were two gentlemen. As the policemen stood, one on each side of the door to assist me to alight, both grasping my arms as I descended from the carriage, one of the gentlemen stepped forward and said in astonished tone:

"Why, Madame Hilton, what is the meaning of this? What is the matter?"

I recognized him as a gentleman who had boarded at the Worsham House during the time that I was one of its inmates, and who spoke French fluently. I seized his hands in a transport of relief, I cried:

"Oh, Sir, my husband has had me arrested as a crazy woman, and they are going to put me in that asylum. He has taken my child from me, and I have no friends."

"Yes, Madame, you have one friend, at least. Release that lady instantly," he said to the policemen in a peremptory tone. Then, turning to me: "Do not be alarmed, Madame, you shall not be taken in there."

The men shrank back muttering, "We only obeyed orders; we are poor, and have to do these jobs. They said the lady was mad, and she did look mad about the eyes."

The gentlemen requested me to reseat myself in the carriage, and entering it themselves, we drove rapidly back to Memphis, where they courteously bade me adieu at the door of Mrs. Byrne's boarding-house.

Two days afterward, one of these gentlemen called upon me to inform me that Dr. Hilton had gone to Jackson, for the purpose of marrying a young lady there. At first I would not believe it; but gradually the conviction forced itself upon me that it might be true, as he had threatened it; I asked the gentleman to be kind enough to tell me the young lady's name. He did so, and I instantly determined to write to her, and reveal the true character of the man she was about to marry. As soon, therefore, as the gentleman had departed, I wrote her a letter, telling her of the circumstances under which I had signed the contract of separation, enclosing a copy of it, and also detailing to her the cruel treatment I had experienced at the hands of Dr. Hilton. I finished the letter with these words:

"*MADemoiselle*:—Dr. Hilton is my husband in the sight of God—if you marry him after what I have told you, you commit a sin, the consequences of which shall follow you and yours all the days of your life. A curse will be on your children, and on your children's children."

I learned afterward, that the young lady received my letter, but trusting and believing in the representations of her lover, false though they were, she was still determined to marry him, but owing to the strong opposition of her relatives and friends, the marriage was not consummated at the appointed time, but was indefinitely postponed, and he returned to Memphis. In the meantime, I tried every means by which

I might discover my child, but in vain; and as a last resource, I commenced searching the city myself, going up one street and down another, through every alley and by-way, peering into every house, and amongst every group of children; wearily and vainly searching through the day, and coming home at night to throw myself upon my lonely, restless couch and pray for death. But hope always came with the morning; and so I would renew my weary rambles, and at last my efforts were crowned with success. One day, when hope had almost died in my heart, I turned, by some blessed chance, into an alley through which I had often passed before. As I walked slowly through it, I saw before me, in a miserable, dirty yard, belonging to a still more miserable, squalid-looking house or hut, a poor, little, abandoned-looking child, whom I recognized instinctively as *Fifine*. She was standing in a listless attitude, looking down upon the ground. I could scarcely credit my sight, for I did not believe that Dr. Hilton would place his child in such a filthy place.

"Oh, *Fifine*! *Fifine*!" I cried. She turned and screamed: "Oh *maman*, *maman*!" and climbing over the fence, once more I held my precious darling to my throbbing breast. Oh with what a light clasp her loving arms clung to my neck, as she murmured incessantly: "Oh, *maman*, *maman*, take *Fifine* away."

A woman appeared in the doorway, with a bucket in her hand, and not perceiving me, called in a sharp, angry tone:

"Come here you lazy imp, or I'll —"

At this moment I stepped forward, and was about to speak, when she made a rush toward me, crying:

"So, you have hunted us out at last, have you? Let down that child!"

I turned, and ran at my utmost speed. She pursued me, shouting: "Stop that woman. She has stolen the child!" Her frantic cries served to urge my feet to faster flight, and I ran like the wind. A crowd gathered, but did not attempt to molest or stop me; and panting and breathless, I arrived at the door of my boarding-house. As I rung the bell, a hand was laid

upon my arm, and looking up, I recognized the face of the kind policeman who had refused to arrest me at the instance of Col. Hilton, but had given my child money instead. He turned to the woman, who had followed me all the way, and who now came up. I shuddered at the sight of her coarse, red face, and pressed Fifine closer in my arms. Hearing her story, he said to her: "I do not understand how a mother can steal her own child. Go home, woman, or I will arrest you for a disturbance of the peace."

Then turning to me, the policeman said, in a kind voice: "Go into the house, Madame, you are very tired. No one shall molest you."

And thus this noble-hearted man rendered me a second service.

My joy was complete and intense, at once again having my darling child constantly with me. I dared not leave her for one moment, and she was evidently as happy as a little bird, which, having fallen from the nest upon the hard, cold ground, is picked up by some kind hand, and restored to the shelter of the nest, and the warmth of the mother's breast.

About this time, I received information, that Col. Hilton was in Memphis, and I determined to try and see him, to know if he would not do something for me. He was staying at a Mr. Wilson's. I went to the house, rung the bell; but upon my giving my name to the servant, who answered the bell, I was refused admittance. I determined to watch the house, and did so. After waiting about two hours, the door opened, and I saw Col. Hilton descending the steps. I sprang up beside him; but with a pale, agitated face, he quickly ran back into the house, and closed the door. I do not wonder at his being alarmed at the sight of me, for I looked wild and wretched enough to lead any one to suppose I had lost my reason; and his guilty conscience made him fear a meeting with me. I was sore distressed; my troubles were crowding thick and fast upon me. Impoverished and ill, I knew not which way to turn. My landlady's manner had become insolent and unkind. I had no money to give her, and she

finally demanded my room; and threatened to turn me out of doors, unless I paid her the money due on my board. I took my child, and went to Dr. Tucker and asked his advice.

In a gentle, pitying manner, he said to me:

"Madame, you are evidently ill, and need kind nursing. Go to the Catholic Hospital, and remain there until you gain strength and health. You will be kindly cared for by the good sisters. The physicians all know me, and you will be tenderly received."

I took his advice, and presented myself to the medical board; underwent an examination, and was immediately admitted to the hospital, where I was given a room, which I and my child alone occupied.

Sister Agnes, under whose charge I was placed, knowing my sad story, manifested the greatest interest in me, and cared for me and my little one most tenderly. Fifine roamed about the house, going from room to room, as happy as a kitten; but to my great sorrow and distress, she contracted a disease of the eyes, then very prevalent, and I feared that she would become blind. The fever clung tenaciously to my poor exhausted frame, and I waited impatiently for the day when I should be pronounced well enough to go out. I knew that Dr. Hilton was in the city, and I determined, for my child's sake, to make one more appeal to him. The first moment that I was permitted to leave the hospital, I took my poor, little, blind child by the hand, and went to Dr. Hilton's office. He was sitting by the window, lazily smoking a cigar. His look of astonishment, as I advanced toward him, changed to one of fury. I placed Fifine on the floor before him, and said simply:

"Dr. Hilton, my child is blind. I have been ill in the hospital for a long time; but now I can leave there, if I can find some place to go. Will you assist me?"

He looked at us in silence, with a cold, un pitying look, that chilled my very heart; and it was in utter hopelessness that I made my sobbing appeal.

"Oh, Dr. Hilton, what in God's name will become of me?"



My courage is gone; my health is gone. Must I end my poor young blighted life in the hospital? Oh, I would that my child and I were both in the grave. For the sake of Christ; by your hope of heaven; by the memory of those far-away days, when you loved me, and we were happy, I implore you to help me."

At last, he deigned to speak to me. He held a cane in his hand, with which he was coolly and indifferently tapping the toe of his boot. Ah! I knew that cane well. I had felt its weight; and as I looked upon it, my heart was filled with such an intense hatred of this man, who viewed with scorn and indifference the suffering he had caused, that, if I had possessed the necessary strength, I could have wrenched that hated cane from his hands, and returned ten-fold the blows he had showered upon me.

"Madame," said he, lazily puffing a long volume of smoke from his lips, and glancing toward me; "give me the child, and you can return to Yazoo City. I will give you the means, and will pay all your expenses, if you will but leave this place. You have no longer any claim upon me. You are unable to support the child; I have a right to her; you have none. I will have her; and will go to law, if necessary, to obtain possession of her."

"No!" I cried indignantly. "No! You dare not go to law. You know by what false statements I was induced to sign that paper. My signature was fraudulently obtained; and you dare not have the matter investigated in the court. I am poor and penniless; a deserted wife in a strange country. I cannot speak your language; I am powerless, friendless, and alone; I am defenceless, with ruin and starvation staring me and my little child in the face. Oh, sir, your bright star is going to decline. Night—bleak and bitter—will overtake you; and every hope you have will be wrenched away from you, as you have taken mine!"

"There, there, Laure," he said, with an insolent nod of the head. "Don't take to high tragedy. It does n't suit you; you are too *petite*. This whole matter can be summed up in

a few words. I no longer love you; *au contraire*, I hate you. Do you hear? Well, we are divorced; and I am going to marry again; but I am disposed to be generous toward you. I will pay all your indebtedness, and give you a small income, enough for your immediate wants, if you will leave this place. I will also promise that Fifine shall be well cared for. Of course, you understand that she remains with me. It is useless for you to resist me; the law will support me."

"Oh, Dr. Hilton, I cannot live without my child. I will die before I will yield her to you."

"Very well. In that case, I shall do nothing for you;" and with these words, he arose, came to me, and seizing me by the shoulders, thrust me out of the room, and locked the door.

Taking my poor little blind one in my arms, I returned to the hospital. The fever was again burning and seething in my veins; and throwing myself upon my little hard bed, I soon became delirious and unconscious. When I recovered my senses, my precious treasure was gone—again stolen from me. Yes, my child was gone; and no one could give an account of how or when she had disappeared.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

### MY JEWEL IS STOLEN AND FOUND.

I WILL spare my readers a repetition of the wretchedness induced by this new trial. Suffice it to say, I went through with the same wearisome search. I was regarded as a crazy woman by many; for I repeatedly went to the same places, without being conscious of it. Some pitied me, while others turned coldly away from me. I thought of Judge Richards, and sought his house, to ask his advice, but was informed that he had gone to Washington. I will not attempt to describe this weary time; but will pass over all my failures, and recount only my success.

I had always confined my wanderings within the precincts of the city; but one day I left it far behind; and, seeking the country, dragged my weary footsteps on and on, peering into every house and yard, pausing to listen to the sound of every voice, hoping to hear the childish tones I loved so well, stopping to rest now and then, only to rise again with a restless longing to pursue my apparently hopeless search. I was like the Wandering Jew, seeking for rest, seeking for his lost soul. Suddenly I came upon a low, log hut, occupied by negroes. Some children were playing outside the house; and, as I was passing them, listening to their talk, as it had become my habit, to listen to the speech of all children, I was suddenly electrified, as it were, by hearing one of these little black children say: "Fifine is pretty, and she likes me better than she does you."

I sprang forward. "Who is Fifine? Is she a white child?" I demanded.

"Yes," answered one of them; but the rest, frightened at me ran away toward the house. I turned to the boy who had spoken, and said: "Go and bring her here to me, and I will give you something."

"I can't, for the man told mammy not to let her go outside the house, or see any one."

I said no more, but ran to the hovel, which I entered without ceremony. A short, fleshy negress was busying herself before a large fire. I stood like a statue, perfectly speechless.

"Did you want anything, Missus?" asked the negress, recovering from her astonishment at my sudden entrance.

"You have a little white child here, will you not let me see her?"

"No, Miss; I had my orders not to let any one see her but the man what brought her here. He said, if a lady come to trouble me 'bout her, just to send for a policeman. So, Miss, if you don't leave the house I'll send for one sure 'nuff."

"Does the white man pay you for taking care of this child?" I asked.

"He aint gim me a copper cent yit, but he does say I shall be well paid arter a while."

I was obliged to sit down, for I felt faint and exhausted. Besides, I was determined to see the child before I left the house. Just then I heard the voices of children in the next room; and a little boy, the same one who had answered my question, came in, and said:

"Mammy, does the white lady want to see Fife?"

The very sound of the name infused me with fresh strength. I sprang to the woman, and laying my hand upon her mouth, said to her: "Do not scream, my good aunty, I am the mother of that child, and I shall not leave the house until I see her;" and then I called loudly, several times, "Fifine, Fifine!" I heard a childish scream; the swift patter of little feet. The door opened, and like a flash of lightning, my darling was in my arms once more; but the happiness was too great, too overwhelming for me in my exhausted condition. I fainted away, and when I recovered, she was gone. God in Heaven! could I endure this, to have her in my arms for a few moments, only to lose her? I was determined not to leave the house until I found her again, thinking that she was hid somewhere within it. I appealed to the negress, but she was deaf to my entreaties. I walked about the house outside, moaning and crying, and calling her name over and over again. I walked toward the city, screaming in agony as I went. About a quarter of a mile from the hovel, where I had found Fifine, I met an old negro, with a saw on his back. He stopped, as he saw me, and said: "Why, why, what de matter wid *you*, Missus? 'Pears like as if de world was commin' to an end anyhow, for here you be goin' 'bout 'stressed and groanin', and ober dar in dat house dey is killin' a child;" and he pointed toward a clump of trees that completely hid from my view a little hut. Without replying to the old man, I ran with frantic haste toward the hut, screaming: "Oh, they are killing my child." The cabin was tightly closed; but, oh, Heaven be praised, I heard my child's voice, crying; but some one was evidently trying to smother the sound.

I knew that I was powerless. My resolution was taken instantly. I sped back to the city, as fast as my weary feet

would carry me, although every moment seemed an age. I went directly to the Chief of Police; and in a few words, I told him of the abduction of my child, and of my knowledge of her present whereabouts. He believed me; for he had heard my sad story from the two policemen whom I have spoken of, as being so kind to me. He at once ordered a policeman to accompany me, and together we returned to the cabin.

The hut was still closed, but my companion threatened to break the door down if it was not quickly opened. The threat produced the desired effect. The door was opened by a negro woman, and once more my child was restored to me, and I returned home—if home it could be called.

The next day, I sought Dr. Tucker, and solicited his advice in regard to my future course. He received me very kindly, congratulated me on the recovery of my child, and my own progress toward health, and advised me to leave the hospital and go to a private boarding-house.

I burst into tears, and said: "Doctor, I have no means to pay my board, and as long as my health is so delicate, I am unable to work."

"Do not be uneasy about that, Madame, I will see that Dr. Hilton pays your board; and after you get well and strong, we will talk about the kind of work you can do to support yourself and child. Perhaps you can obtain a few scholars in French and music, which will be the easiest manner in which you can gain a livelihood. But just now, take good care of yourself and this little one; and I also advise you, Madame, for your own welfare and peace of mind, never to go to Dr. Hilton again. It will do you no good, and may be productive of harm. Give him up—he is not worthy of you. You are divorced from him, and he is determined to marry some one who has property. Never utter his name, Madame, cast him out of your thoughts; for, I repeat, he is not worthy of you."

"Oh, Dr. Tucker, he is my husband, and the father of my child;" was all the reply that I made to his plain, blunt

speech, although, in my heart, I acknowledged that he was right. I knew that I should have had more pride than to still cling to the man who was my husband, and to love him; but I was so crushed and humiliated with the trouble and miseries I had endured, that all pride had left me—not a vestige remained. I was only a poor, heart-broken woman.

I am picturing to you, my readers, the realities of my life. I am not writing a romance—a novel, such as daily feeds the public mind with excitement and passion—no, no; I am only telling, in the simplest words at my command, the true story of my unhappy life; and endeavoring to draw a true picture of weak human nature, such as really existed. Then do not blame me, if I confess that I did love this man, notwithstanding the systematic and pitiless course of cruelty he had pursued toward me.

After making this simple reply to Dr. Tucker's well-meant advice; my mind naturally reverted to that short, but happy period of my married life, when all was *couleur de rose*, and every moment brought to me its burden of bliss. Oh, for that fleeting happiness, too perfect, too exquisite to last, I forgave him all—all that had passed since then. As I thought of those halcyon days of the past, a sparkle came to my eyes, and a smile to my lips. I looked up, and saw Dr. Tucker regarding me with a kindly, pitying look. Impulsively I said:

"Will you allow me to relate a part of my story to you, that is not all sadness? Oh, believe me, I was happy once;" and sobs choked my utterance.

"Madame," he replied, "nothing would gratify me more. It is a favor I have long desired to ask of you. I can see that you have once been beautiful, without saying that you are not so now. You have had much trouble, I know; but renewed health, and tranquility of mind, will restore to you those attractions which are only dimmed—not lost. Proceed, Madame; I am only too happy to listen to you."

I commenced my story, and told him all its principal features. I spoke of Dr. Ross, my child's godfather, upon

whose friendship I had relied, and bewailed bitterly my ignorance of his present locality. Dr. Tucker interrupted me.

"Dr. Ross! I knew him well! Why, Madame, he died at Vicksburg a year or more ago. Did not Dr. Hilton tell you?"

"No, sir," I replied; startled and stunned by the sudden news. "Dr. Ross and Dr. Hilton were very good friends when they were in Paris, but after Dr. Hilton came to America, he conceived a dislike for Dr. Ross, because the latter acted the part of a true friend toward the deserted wife and child of his former companion."

I resumed my narrative; and when I had finished, Dr. Tucker expressed his sympathy and commiseration in earnest, heartfelt words, repeating his promise of compelling Dr. Hilton to assist me for so long a time as I felt the necessity of accepting such assistance. He then shook hands with me cordially, and I returned to the hospital.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

### THE MARRIAGE.

SEVERAL days passed away, during which I remained quietly in my room. My child's eyes were improving under the skilful treatment of Dr. Tucker; and consequently I was relieved from the horrible fear which had taken possession of me, of her permanent blindness.

In the society of sweet Sister Agnes, I found a solace and a calm, that had been strangers to my heart for many a long day; and my troubled soul was fast growing quiet and humble under the peaceful and serene influences around me.

One morning, Dr. Tucker entered my room, his eyes sparkling and his face beaming with joy. I hastened toward him. "What is it, Dr. Tucker? You have something to tell me."

For reply, he placed a large purse, full of money, in my hands. I looked at it in astonishment.

"What is this for, and where did it come from?" I asked.

"It is to furnish a home for you, Madame; and you shall also be placed in receipt of a comfortable income, on the condition that you will molest and annoy Dr. Hilton no more. Are you willing to do this, Madame? Will you acknowledge yourself divorced?"

I replied, slowly: "I will try to content myself with my home and my child. I will seek Dr. Hilton no more; but I never will acknowledge myself divorced from him, who is my husband in the sight of God. True, I signed that wretched paper, but my signature was obtained through deceit and fraud."

"But *he* considers that you are legally divorced, Madame; for he started this morning for Jackson, in order to consummate his marriage with a young lady of that place."

"I cannot believe this to be true, Dr. Tucker. I must not believe it. Do not tell me anything, for I feel that I cannot bear it. I will go; but no, I promised; and I here repeat, that I will adhere to my promise of never voluntarily seeking him again."

"That is right, Madame. I rejoice at your determination. In the meantime, I will seek a boarding-house, where you will be more comfortable than you are here. Dr. Hilton has placed funds at my disposal, in order that you may want for nothing."

The next day saw my child and myself installed in a nice little room, at a pleasant boarding-house, kept by Mrs. Warner; and, as my mind was relieved of the fear of immediate want and necessities, my health improved, and I grew stronger day by day, while little Fifiue gained also in beauty and intelligence.

At this time, I received a letter from my brother François, who had, it seemed, been compelled to leave the army on account of ill health, and was now at our old home in St. Jean de Blanc. François was my favorite brother; but I had

heard nothing of him since I had left France until now. This letter contained the sad intelligence of the death of my beloved sister Elise, who died a few hours after her *accouchement*, and was buried with her infant on her breast. She left a message of love and kindness for me; saying that, if spirits disembodied were permitted to return, and watch over the beloved ones still lingering on earth, her invisible presence should be ever with me.

François concluded his long letter by telling me that Elise had told him, that she feared I was unhappy; and added: "If this be true, Laure, write to me at once, freely and unreservedly, and I will come to you at once. You shall see what your brother can do for you."

Great, indeed, was my grief at hearing of the death of my beloved sister; but my preceding troubles had already so crushed my heart, that this new affliction was but an additional drop that mingled with and was lost in the wide stream of sorrow that swept over my desolate life.

A few days after I had received this letter from my brother, Dr. Tucker came to see me; and as he entered my room, his speaking, eloquent face betrayed the fact that he had some news for me.

My first thought was of my husband; for so, in my heart, I still called him.

"What is it, doctor? You have something about Dr. Hilton to tell me," I said, breathlessly.

"Yes, Madame; it is of him that I came to speak. Be patient and calm, or I cannot tell you what it is necessary for you to know. You must have courage, Madame; and call your pride to your aid; and remember that, although I bring you unhappiness, I am your truest, best friend."

"Oh, Dr. Tucker, tell me what it is? I can bear anything but suspense. See, I am calm now."

A moment's silence ensued; and then my kind friend, with accents of pity trembling in the tones of his voice, said:

"I dislike to be the bearer of this sad intelligence to you; but you must hear it sooner or later, and perhaps some one

will not spare your feelings as I have done, and shall continue to do. Dr. Hilton is married. He arrived here last night with his new wife, while you and your child were sleeping quietly; but left the city again early this morning."

I waited to hear no more, but broke from him, and threw myself upon my bed in all the misery of blank despair. In that moment was revealed to me the fact, that I had been clinging tenaciously to a vain hope; that my husband would some day relent, and take me and my little one once more to his arms. The prattle of my child was all unheeded; and the day passed away, leaving me still stupified, and incapable of comprehending aught but my great and overwhelming sorrow. My heart was like a burning fire within my breast. One moment consumed by the keen pangs of jealousy, and the next filled with terrible, yet impotent thoughts of revenge. Thus I passed that wretched day and night.

Toward morning I fell into a light slumber, during which I dreamed the following dream:

I thought I was in a large, handsome room, the walls of which were hung with mirrors, and decorated with flowers. It was filled with people dressed in radiant attire; but I could not see a face, except that of Dr. Hilton, and a tall, fair woman who stood beside him. As I looked at the guests assembled in the room, all turned their backs upon me; so, whichever way I gazed, I could not distinguish a face, except those two. Dr. Hilton kept his eyes fastened upon me; and although I was at the farthest end of the apartment, I could hear him grind his teeth at me. His face wore a guilty look. His head was bent down, and he scowled at me from under his black brows. I approached him, but he refused to speak to me. At that moment, a gentleman approached, and offered me a rose; which I was about to accept, when Dr. Hilton darted forward, and struck it from my hand. As it fell to the ground, a small, white snake disengaged itself from the crimson leaves, and coiling itself about his wrist, writhed and twisted until it disappeared up his sleeve, despite his efforts to dislodge it. Terror-stricken, I flew to the side of the lady who was looking at me, for protection, and asked:

"Pray tell me, Mademoiselle, why are you all gathered here? what is the cause of this festivity? No one seems to be rejoicing, and yet you are all dressed as if it were a gala day."

Sadly she replied: "These people are here to witness my marriage. It is my wedding-day, and this gentleman," pointing to Dr. Hilton, "is my husband."

I grasped her hand, and gazed for one moment in her face. "It were better that it were your burial-day, Madame. If you have taken that man for your husband, you have taken a life-long sorrow to your heart."

At this I awoke, to find my pillow wet with tears, and the first rays of the morning sun stealing into my room.

The singular part of this dream is, that when, some time afterward, I saw Dr. Hilton's wife, I recognized her at once as the tall, fair woman of my dream — although, at the time she appeared to me in my sleep, I had never beheld her, or had never even heard a description of her personal appearance.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### HUMILIATION.

SCARCELY knowing what my future course would be, I felt that I could no longer remain in Memphis. A feeling of unrest, a desire for change, took possession of me; and I determined that I would no longer remain a dependent upon the bounty of one who had so shamefully abandoned me. I made up my mind to return to Yazoo City, longing to be once more with the kind, true friends who had bestowed so much care and affection upon me. Besides, I was like the poor moth, fluttering near the blaze of the candle. I wanted to be near Dr. Hilton, where I could hear of him often, perhaps see him pass in the streets, or at least know of his welfare. I no

longer expected anything from him; but I needed the stimulant of a continued excitement, and this I felt his near presence would afford me. I felt that there was danger in it, but I sought it, for it seemed that a stagnant existence would drive me wild.

I sent for Dr. Tucker, and acquainted him with my intention. He tried to dissuade me from fulfilling it; but finding that I was determined, he placed in my hands the residue of the money with which Dr. Hilton had entrusted him, bade me God speed; and kissing little Fifine, who was a great pet with him, and shaking hands with me, he hurried from the room.

I have sometimes thought that Dr. Tucker, himself, was the donor of the money so liberally bestowed upon me, as the gift of Dr. Hilton. Several circumstances, slight in themselves induced this thought. If it was so; then, truly, never was an act of kindness more nobly, more delicately performed, than by this good, true man.

The news of Dr. Hilton's marriage spread like wild-fire among those who were acquainted with his previous history.

A few days before my intended departure, I received a visit from a gentleman who had manifested considerable interest in me when I boarded at the Worsham House. He was a tall, fair, handsome man, with light, curling hair, beard and mustache, gentlemanly in his bearing, pleasant and winning in his address; a Kentuckian by birth, and speaking French with all the fluency of a native Parisian. He disclosed by degrees, his motive for calling upon me; broaching a subject, which he handled with great delicacy and tact, veiling his real meaning with so much kindness and benevolence, clothing it with such specious sophistry, that I was deceived as to his true motive, until a final question made his wish clear to my comprehension. For the moment I was wounded and humiliated at the audacity of this man. I was ashamed and mortified for him, as well as for myself. My face fairly blazed with the crimson blushes of outraged feeling, as I pointed to the door and bursting into tears, I sought to hide my face, but he sprang to my

side, and seizing my hand, cried: "Do not be angry, Madame, I entreat you. You do wrong in repulsing me. I will love and protect you. What can you do? You are young and pretty, and will be assailed with offers of this kind; for I tell you, many, very many believe the truth of Dr. Hilton's statement regarding you.

"What statement?" I asked, faintly snatching my hand from his clasp.

"He says that you are not, and never have been his wife; that you are only a *grisette*, whom he took under his protection in Paris, and that you followed him to this country in order to extort money from him."

I covered my face with my hands, and remained silent. He continued:

"You are young, Madame, and you will have to struggle hard, in order to support yourself and child, unless you accept the protection of some one like myself. You had better consider my offer, Madame."

Amazed and confounded at his persistence, and trembling with passion, I cried:

"Oh, sir, have you the unmanliness to repeat this insult. If you do not leave the room, I shall be compelled to leave you in the possession of it."

He walked toward the door, but paused, and said in a sorrowful voice:

"Madame, you are a brave woman, and I wish you well. I regret that I have wounded your feelings."

"Sir," I replied with dignity. "You have, indeed, wounded my feelings, and humiliated me beyond measure; but I forgive you with all my heart. Only, sir, let me beg of you to be careful in the future, and not misjudge and insult a woman already weighed down to the earth by the heavy hand of misfortune."

"Madame, I truly beg your forgiveness; and I assure you that you have won my respect; and I feel from this moment, a sincere interest in your welfare; and should you ever need a friend, you will find one in me. And now, Madame, may I not ask you, what are your plans for the future?"

"Alas, I have none," I replied. "But this interview forces me to think. How can I defend myself from the slanders, the cruel falsehoods which you tell me Dr. Hilton has circulated concerning me, and which, I fear, will expose me to a repetition of this day's humiliation. I solemnly declare to you, that I am Dr. Hilton's lawful wife. I know that I shall have to struggle and suffer, in order to gain a livelihood, but I will raise his child as carefully and tenderly as if her father had not abandoned her. She shall never, (as long as it is possible for me to keep her in ignorance,) feel the cruel deprivation of his protection. But when she is older, poor child, the time will come, must come, when the bitter sense of her forlorn position, together with the knowledge of her father's base, unmanly conduct toward her mother, and his foul slanders against that innocent, unhappy mother, will fall like a withering, desolating blight upon her young and stainless life. Oh, when I think of her, my little child, I pray that a just retribution may fall upon her unnatural father. But—oh, my God—I will forgive; I will be generous. I will teach her true charity and kindly feeling; and then, perhaps, He will spare my only darling to me. But, sir, I confess to you, that there are moments when terrible thoughts take possession of me; and I feel revengeful and rebellious." I ceased, trembling with excitement.

"Madame," said the gentleman, tears springing to his eyes; "I humbly ask your forgiveness for the insult I have offered you. Here is my card; if I can ever be of service to you, make me sensible of your pardon by applying to me. I pray you to do so without hesitation."

I thanked him, and he courteously bade me adieu. I mention this as one instance of many, for it is true that I was subjected to many trials of this kind.

I speedily completed my arrangements, and was soon on my way to Yazoo City, having taken passage on one of the magnificent steamers of the Mississippi River. There were a great many passengers on board, but I became acquainted with but one of them.



This was a lady, whose sweet, gentle countenance, and lady-like manners won my admiration. She took a great deal of notice of my little girl, and through her we soon became acquainted; and in the intercourse that followed, I obtained information that was of considerable importance to me, since it had the effect of causing me to change my destination, and proceed to New Orleans.

The lady, whose name was Ross, informed me that she resided in Canton, Mississippi; and also told me, in reply to my inquiries, that she had many acquaintances living in Yazoo City, and its vicinity. I veiled the agitation I felt, and asked her if she knew Col. Hilton of Silver Creek. She answered: "Oh yes, they are relations of ours; Dr. Hilton is a cousin of my husband."

Just then Mr. Ross approached, and joined in the conversation. "Yes," said he, as if in continuation of her remarks. "Cousin Joe was married about two weeks ago."

"Ah," I said unconcernedly, "may I ask to whom?"

Mr. Ross replied: "He married Miss O——s of Jackson. She is his second wife. I suppose you have heard, Madame, that he was divorced from his first wife, a French lady."

"And where is she?" I forced myself to ask.

"Oh, she has returned to her people in France, or is dead, I don't know which."

My face must have portrayed the anguish of my mind, for Mrs. Ross noticed it, and motioned to her husband to be silent. I hastened to my state-room, and fell upon my knees striving to compose my thoughts, but I could not control my grief. Taking my little girl in my arms I returned to Mrs. Ross. She was talking with her husband in low tones, and did not perceive my approach. I placed Ffine before them, and said, my voice trembling with agitation:

"Look, Mr. Ross, look, Madame, at this child, and tell me whom she resembles."

Mr. Ross turned as white as marble; he rose from his seat, and stared at his wife, and she at him, with blank dismay pictured on their faces. If any one could have seen the emo-

tions struggling in my heart they would have pitied me. With a sudden movement Mrs. Ross caught Ffine to her bosom, and said:

"Oh you little angel! Why did God send so beautiful a being into this world of misery and wretchedness, to suffer for the sins of others?"

Her words unlocked the fountains of my soul, and I wept bitterly. After I became composed, they besought me to tell them everything. I complied, and I shall never forget the expression of the face of Mr. Ross throughout the recital. It was white and cold, and the lips quivered with suppressed passion, while the tears of his wife expressed her true womanly sympathy. She spoke sweet words of comfort to me, and bade me not despair, adding:

"If you find yourself at any time unable to take care of your child send her to me; she shall be educated with my own two daughters, and shall be as dear to me as they are."

I thanked her. She continued:

"May I ask, Madame, what you intend to do? How will you support yourself in the future?"

I begged her to advise me, and while we were conversing, Mr. Ross left us. She counseled me to go to New Orleans, and, representing myself to be a widow, seek employment; for, said she, "You are more likely to obtain work, if you desire it, or scholars, if you wish to teach, in a large place than in a small one."

At this moment, Mr. Ross returned, accompanied by a gentleman, whose hair and beard were white and silvery. Mr. Ross introduced him to me as a clergyman. I have forgotten the name. He addressed himself to me in the following terms:

"Madame, pardon the liberty I am taking in speaking to you; but Mr. Ross has been just relating to me your sad story. I am well acquainted with Dr. Hilton. I was at his wedding. I know that he made repeated statements to the effect that you had left America with the intention of returning to France,

but that you had died upon the ocean; and his present wife this day believes you dead."

I was horror-stricken at this new evidence of Dr. Hilton's baseness; but for me there was nought but submission. It was quite late; and Mrs. Ross, seeing that I needed solitude and rest, went with me to my room. She repeated her advice about my going to New Orleans; and, giving me her card, said:

"I shall leave the boat at five o'clock in the morning, so I will bid you good-by to-night. Write to me, my dear child, should you require assistance, and I will aid you. Would that I could dispel the dark shadows that encompass you; but the few days that I have been with you, have given me sufficient knowledge of you to know that you will make friends wherever you go. Believe me, I would rather be in your situation than in Dr. Hilton's;" and taking my head between her hands, she kissed me several times, and left me.

The next morning, quite early and quite unexpectedly, I saw my sweet friend once more. Just before we reached Vicksburg, at which place she left the boat, she came to my room; and placing a well-filled purse on the pillow beside me, whispered:

"Do not be offended; but take this gift as freely as if it came from your own dear mother. It is a little tribute of sympathy and respect offered to you by the gentlemen on the boat;" and she embraced me warmly. I was about to speak, but she interrupted me: "No thanks. I only wish it were twice as much."

The boat soon landed at Vicksburg, and these kind friends left me. I never saw them again.

I remained in my state-room nearly all the while, preferring its seclusion to the noise of the cabin, where, since my story had become so generally known, I was assailed with questions and annoyed with attentions, kindly meant, I have no doubt, but nevertheless troublesome. I wrote a note to the captain, however, begging him to return my thanks to the gentlemen and ladies who had been so generous toward me. My heart

was full of gratitude; but my command of English words was so poor, that I could only faintly express it.

We were drawing near New Orleans, and I had not as yet paid my passage. I sent for the clerk of the boat, and proffered the money to him; but he refused to receive it, adding, that he had the captain's orders for doing so. I took an early opportunity of thanking the latter, who said, in reply:

"Madame, you are welcome to go as far as my boat runs. I have been a captain on the river for twenty-five years; and I have never heard or read of such a history as yours. And for one so youthful to exhibit such energy as you have done is very remarkable; I may say wonderful; and I feel a profound respect for you, Madame. God bless you! Train up your little daughter to be like her mother, and she'll be all right. Try to forget the unhappy man who has so injured you. Justice will overtake him some day. He can't run away from it always."

I thanked the good man for the true, earnest kindness visible in his blunt speech; and he continued:

"And now, Madame, let me tell you something. Dr. Hilton's present wife is in New Orleans, but he is not with her. He has gone up to Yazoo City; but she is staying with some relatives on Phrytania Street. Here is the number of the house."

Oh, how my heart leaped at this information. I determined instantly to go and see her; to stand face to face with the woman who had superseded me in my husband's affections, and who now occupied the place that should be mine alone. Upon our arrival at New Orleans, I went, at the captain's suggestion, to a private boarding-house, kept by Mrs. White. The next day, with trembling limbs, and faint, uncertain mind, I proceeded to Phrytania Street; and, having found the house bearing the number given me by the kind captain, without giving myself time to think, for my courage was already on the wane. I ascended the steps hastily, and rang the bell.

After all, what did I want? For what was I there? What

motive prompted me to seek this interview? I could not tell, save that I was impelled by a vague, yet strong desire to see this other wife face to face. I was doomed to disappointment. A tall, thin, yellow woman came to the door. Wishing to appear unconcerned, I asked:

"Is Mr. C—— at home?"

"No; he has gone with Missus to the lake.

"Is Mrs. Hilton in?"—the name fell bitterly from my lips.

"Miss Fannie! oh, no; she has been gone just a little while. Her husband came for her to-day, and took her away in a great hurry; she was n't ready to go, either."

I saw that this woman was very talkative, and so I questioned her.

"We were all very much 'stonished, when he came and hurried her off. He seemed in a dreadful way, and would not give Miss Fannie time to eat her dinner. We all had to turn in and help her pack her trunk,"

Just at this moment, she glanced down at Fifine, who was clinging to my dress.

"My goodness gracious!" she exclaimed; "what a likeness!" Then, staring at me in affright: "I heard tell he had another wife living; be you she?"

"What makes you think so?" I asked.

"Why, because that child looks so much like Dr. Hilton."

"Does his present wife know that he has another wife and child?"

"She knew of it," she replied, still staring at Fifine; "but Dr. Hilton told her that she was dead."

"Well, you can tell your Miss Fannie that she is not dead. I am that wife, and this is his child." And turning away from the astonished woman, I returned to my boarding-house.

I realized more and more acutely than ever, that my husband was indeed dead to me, but oh! alive for another. "Oh, merciful God!" I cried, "have pity on me, for I am very desolate." I wished no harm to the one who filled my place; but when I said my prayers for myself and little one, I prayed that she might never lack love and protection. "Oh, God,"

I said, "fill her heart with pity for the poor, forsaken, wandering wife, and outcast child; and if Thou sendest little children to lie in her arms, and nestle in her bosom, may she breathe over their innocent faces a prayer for us, outcast and homeless; but, thanks to Thee, oh God, as innocent as they.

## CHAPTER XLIX.

### CONTENTMENT.

ABOUT this time I received a letter from Mrs. Wolfe, a lady residing in Arkansas, to whom Sister Agnes had written, recommending me to her as a governess for her children. She wrote me a very kind letter, and urgently insisted upon my accepting the situation which she offered me.

I seized with delight upon this opportune offer, for New Orleans had become distasteful to me, and I longed for a settled, peaceful home.

The tocsin of war had sounded, and the preparations for the coming struggle were agitating the whole country. Fort Sumter had fallen, and the siege of Fort Pickens had commenced. South Carolina had seceded, and the other Southern States soon followed.

Thousands upon thousands of volunteers flew to arms. The fever of rebellion leaped fiercely along the veins, and surged hotly in the hearts of those who loved the sunny South, and were ready and willing to lay down their lives in defence of the fancied rights of their beloved country. Enthusiasm, warm and glowing, leaped up like a fierce, unquenchable flame, and sent its scintillating sparks to kindle the watch-fires of civil war at every corner. The hands of the young men involuntarily sought their swords; the voice of the maidens, beloved of their souls, cheered them on, and encouraged them to tread the fiery path. The aged and the wise men counselled

together, and the matrons and mothers wept and prayed in the silence of their chambers.

But my pen is too feeble to attempt a description of this never-to-be-forgotten period in the annals of the country, and I shall content myself with allusions to current events, only when it is necessary, in order to relate more fully my own story.

I left New Orleans, and soon arrived at Mrs. Wolfe's.

This lady resided in Madison, a small town nearly opposite Memphis. She received me very kindly, and without further preliminaries, I entered at once upon my duties as governess. I had four pupils — three girls and one boy. My salary was fixed at six hundred dollars a year; and as my pupils were sweet, obedient children, I became much attached to them, and was comparatively happy. Mrs. Wolfe was, at this time, in much trouble — her husband having left for the seat of war, as captain of one of the volunteer companies. Our days glided by as peacefully and quietly as the state of the country permitted. After school hours, I assisted Mrs. Wolfe in sewing or knitting, for the brave men who were absent on the battle-field, exposed to all the discomforts and deprivations of camp-life.

Six months rolled by, and under the influence of incessant employment, I had succeeded in quelling and subduing the most violent of my feelings, and thought that I still might attain a state of negative peace and tranquility, although I knew full well that real happiness was gone from me forever.

But this quiet life, monotonous though it was, could not last; our pleasant household was destined to be broken up through much misery and sorrow. The beloved husband and father had met his death upon the battle-field, and the terrible news came upon the stricken wife as an avalanche rushes upon a peaceful valley, almost crushing her beneath its weight of sorrow. Only one happiness remained to her, a happiness that was denied to thousands. She was enabled to bring home the beloved remains, and the sweet consolation of weeping over his grave was thus afforded her.

The country was so unsettled, and the state of society so insecure, that Mrs. Wolfe decided to break up house-keeping; and consequently, no longer needed my services. I decided to return to New Orleans, and endeavor to obtain scholars in French and music, or employment of some kind. On the eve of my departure, Mrs. Wolfe presented me with a letter, saying kindly:

"Madame, this is a letter of recommendation to the new trustees of the public school in New Orleans. The greater number of them are personal friends of my own; and with this recommendation you can apply for a situation, which will give you permanent employment, if you desire it, or until you can please yourself better. I shall not feel uneasy about you, Madame. Your disposition and education will enable you to surmount all obstacles, while your manner will secure you many friends. Let me hear often from you. I shall always be most happy to know of your welfare; and if I can ever serve you, in any way, do not hesitate to call upon me."

The grateful tears filled my eyes, as I thanked her, and bade her good-by.

On my arrival at New Orleans, I went at once to my former boarding-house, but found Mrs. White, the landlady, in the midst of hurried preparations for departure. She was going to New York to join her friends, and I was obliged to seek another home. My new location was on St. Charles Street, at Mrs. Hampstead's, where I remained until nearly all my money was exhausted. The public schools were closed, owing to the excitement that prevailed in the city; and the time of their opening was very uncertain. In the meantime, I sought other employment.

Hearing that a Mr. Hart, on Camp street, had contracted with the Government to furnish the soldiers with ready-made clothing, thereby furnishing employment to hundreds of needy women, I applied to him for work, and received a bundle, containing a dozen shirts, for the making of which I was to receive five cents a piece. This was beggary; but I could do no better, and was compelled to accept it. The price of every-

thing was enormous. I was unable to pay any board, and in a few months was deeply in debt. I plied the needle early and late, and lived such a secluded life that I scarcely knew of anything that transpired outside of my little room. It was so difficult for me to read the newspapers, (on account of my imperfect knowledge of the language,) that I seldom opened one for the purpose of perusal. I rarely ever went to the table with the other boarders, but took my humble meals in my own apartment; and in hard, unceasing labor, in a daily struggle for daily bread for my child and myself, the months passed away, until the surrender of New Orleans took place. After this event, the public schools were opened; and, armed with the recommendation which Mrs. Wolfe had given me, and a letter of introduction from Mr. Graham, a gentleman who boarded at Mrs. Hampstead's, I presented myself in Jackson Square, before the Trustees, and was admitted as a candidate for the public examination, to take place in the following week.

I returned home, and acquainted Mrs. Hampstead with my hopes, and the bright prospect before me, and how delighted I was at the thought of soon being able to liquidate my debt to her. The important day came at last; and, with a number of others, before over two hundred spectators, I underwent an examination, which was a fearful ordeal to one so timid and retiring as myself.

The decision was not to be made known until the following day, and the intervening time was passed by me in restless agitation and in vain efforts to tranquilize myself. I was naturally of an excitable temperament, and the numerous trials I had undergone had served to make me still more nervous, and my natural excitability harder to control.

The next day, however, my suspense was at an end. The principal himself called upon me, and said, smilingly, extending to me a newspaper as he did so:

"Madame, I have good news for you. Here is a list of the teachers who have been appointed. I think you will find your name among them."

I seized the paper, and eagerly glanced over the list of names; and, with extreme delight, saw that I was appointed first assistant in French, at the St. Philip's School. How can I describe my joy at my success?

As my boarding-house was too far removed from the scene of my new vocation, I removed to the house of Mrs. Weibling, a lady who had once been in possession of great wealth; but who had been reduced by the misfortunes attendant upon war, to the necessity of keeping a boarding-house.

I was very pleasantly situated; and for eight months the "even tenor of my way" was undisturbed. The first event of any importance that occurred in the school-life, with which I was identified, was the dismissal of the principal, Mr. Ducloud, on the plea, that his mode of discipline was too mild.

His place was filled by a gentleman of the name of Marshall, a cruel, hard-hearted man, whose conduct to my poor, little scholars was such, that my pleasure in teaching them was entirely destroyed.

None of the scholars liked him, and few of the teachers; and I was among the first who applied for a change. My petition received immediate attention, and I was assigned a position in a new school, where I remained fourteen months, giving entire satisfaction. The last six months of the year, I fulfilled the duties of English teacher in the primary department, the teaching of the French language being discontinued in the public schools. At my earnest solicitation, I was appointed, as I have said, to the primary department; but in order to give satisfaction, I was obliged to study hard every night, the lessons I was required to teach next day.

When the public examinations of the schools took place, I enjoyed a little triumph; simple enough, but one which every mother will understand, and sympathize with. My little daughter, who was at this time not yet six years old, appeared upon the stage, dressed in white, and recited a beautiful little English poem, entitled "The Star of the West." Her enunciation was clear and distinct, and the house was very silent during the recitation; but at its conclusion, there was a loud

burst of applause; and, amid the confused buzz of admiration which followed, the question of, "Who is she?" was the most frequent and the most distinct. They called upon her to repeat the recitation, and she was obliged to comply. Madame Gardin, the first teacher, led her forward, and introduced her, by saying: "This is Madame Hilton's little daughter," and she repeated her performance in happy unconsciousness of the homage offered her. Ah, I was very proud of her. The applause that followed was still ringing in my ears, like sweet music, when a lady, who was introduced to me as Mrs. Boulard, approached, and said:

"Are you the same Madame Hilton who lived some time ago in Memphis, Tennessee, whose little child was threatened with blindness; and while in that suffering condition, was stolen from her?"

"Yes, Madame," I replied, and pointing, with all a mother's pride at my *petite Fifi*, I continued:

"And there is my child. You see her eyes are no longer closed, but are as bright as the stars in heaven."

She led me to a seat, and begged me to tell her of all that had happened to me since that unhappy period, and when I had complied, she said:

"Oh, Madame, your courage and endurance are, indeed, wonderful; but God will reward you for all you have suffered. Do you not already see the 'silver lining' of the dark cloud; that shrouded you in its gloomy folds so long? Oh, my dear Madame, you are the proud, happy mother of a beautiful child, who will, doubtless, prove a great blessing to you."

After a little more conversation we parted, but the remembrance of her kind words remained with me, and cheered and comforted me.

## CHAPTER L.

## A SUDDEN DEATH.

THE vacation which followed lasted two months and a half, and I was again obliged to have recourse to my needle; but, although I labored day and night, I was unable to pay my expenses. There was a great deal of gayety, merriment, and excitement prevailing in the city, but it was principally confined to the reigning ruler and his people. The United States troops filled every street, and occupied all the hotels and principal boarding-houses in the city.

The citizens of New Orleans were but illy disposed for pleasure and joy; for, from nearly every family, a husband, a brother, or a son was missing, and the shadow cast from the vacant place fell like a blight upon the loving hearts that sent up daily prayers for the safety of the absent one, or bewailed, in agony and despair, the uncertain fate of those of whom they knew not whether they were alive or dead.

It was with me as it was with many others. My absorbing idea was, how can I support myself and child? It harassed my waking hours; it gave me sleepless, anxious nights; and loomed up before me like a spectre — my constant companion by day and night.

About this time, Mrs. General Banks issued invitations for a large ball, to which all the public school-teachers were invited. I did not dream of going; for, besides the expense necessarily attendant upon preparing a dress for such an occasion, my mind was not fitted for scenes of gayety. When one has been conversant for so long a time with sorrow and suffering only, it is not at a moment's notice that one can be brought to contemplate being a participant in joy and excitement.

Mrs. Weibling, however, advised me to go; telling me that I might lose my situation if I did not accept. So, with her

generous assistance in regard to my toilette, I was enabled to make a presentable appearance, and attended the ball, accompanied by Attorney-General Lynch, who boarded at the St. Charles Hotel.

I did not dance, although I was invited to do so by General Banks himself; but I nevertheless spent a very pleasant evening. The host and hostess were very kind, and all passed off delightfully; at least, it seemed so to me, for the attentions that I received were numerous and very flattering to one, who had been so long debarred from festivities of this or any other kind. I felt too happy and cheerful at seeing so many people bright and joyous, when, for so long a period I had encountered none but sad faces.

I made the acquaintance of General Halpine, and still remember, with keen delight, his genial good humor, and the pleasing conversation that made up the intercourse of an hour, although I suppose he has never since bestowed a thought upon the little insignificant French teacher, whose hasty, impulsive speech seemed to afford him no little amusement.

This little peep at social life did me a vast deal of good. It aroused my pride and self-esteem, without which a woman soon sinks into a careless state of mind—a joyless existence, from which it is hard to raise herself. I felt a keen satisfaction in discovering that I was still attractive, and could make myself interesting and entertaining. This insensibly cheered and encouraged me, and gave to life a more pleasant aspect, by doing away with the tendency to mope, which was fast becoming a habit with me, although it was contrary to my naturally cheerful and joyous disposition. But, oh, how many forebodings filled my heart! If I was happy, it was only in the transient enjoyment of the present moment; for, if I thought of the future, all looked dark and gloomy. Oh, I thought in my sad hours—and these were many, very many—will fate be always relentless? Will there never again be any sunshine in my life? My youth is going away from me; the best part of it is already spent in sorrow and tears. Will the flowers that I love never bloom again in my pathway—

the stars that I worship never again shine over me? Surely God will have pity on me in his own good time, and lighten the heavy burden he has laid upon me.

I shall now have to chronicle a sad circumstance, which broke up the happy family of which I was a member, and sent me adrift again, an unhappy wanderer.

Mrs. Weibling's family consisted of herself, two sons, a daughter, who was a young lady, Miss Leila, and a little girl, six years old. Little May and Ffine soon became very much attached to each other, and were constantly together.

Little May was a beautiful singer, possessing the sweetest voice I ever heard, and when she sung you could hardly tell whether it was she or the birds that warbled such enchanting melody.

One day, she and Ffine were in the garden, playing with some beautiful striped ribbon-grass, which grew there in great profusion; and having gathered their arms full, they came and sat just beneath my window, where I, busy with my sewing, sat and listened to their prattle. Said May:

"Ffine, when I die, will you bring white Cape jessamine and put over my coffin?"

"Yes, May, I will; but I don't like to talk about dying, it frightens me so."

May thought for a little time, and then said: "After I die, Ffine, would you like to have me come back from Heaven, and tell you just how it looks, and how beautiful it is?"

"Yes," said Ffine, "I would love to know that. I always wondered how Heaven would look if it were turned inside out; and you'll be sure to go there, and come back and tell me. But see, May, here is a beautiful bracelet I have made for you; it is just like a lovely green and white ribbon."

At that moment, Mrs. Weibling called to me, to know if I would go with her to take some soup to the hospital, for the poor, sick soldiers. I assented, absently, thinking rather of the dear little prattlers beneath my window.

Mrs. Weibling had just taken a pistol from her little son,



Alfred, which she had desired him to clean, and was about putting it away in her *armoire*, when she said:

"I believe I will load this pistol. I have not loaded one since my husband taught me how, and it may be I have forgotten how. I will see."

She loaded it, and put it away in her *armoire*, and we left the room, and proceeded to the hospital.

After we had left the house, Alfred came back to the room with a companion, and opening the *armoire*, called to the little girls:

"Come May, come Fifine, see how bright and clean I have made my pistol look;" and placing it in his sister's hand, he turned again to the *armoire*, to get a clean handkerchief, when he was frightened and startled at a sudden, loud report. He turned, and saw his little sister stretched lifeless on the floor. He was not aware that the pistol was loaded, and could not realize that the sweet little child was dead. He and Fifine tried to staunch the blood, that poured in torrents from a wound in her pure, beautiful forehead. The children's screams soon filled the house with a crowd of people.

In the meantime, the unhappy mother and myself, all unconscious of the fearful tragedy being enacted in the home we had left so quiet and peaceful, were passing through the different wards of the hospital, stopping now and then to speak a cheering word to some poor, suffering soldier, or to give some soup, or delicacy, to the convalescent. Suddenly, Mrs. Weibling grasped me by the arm, and cried, in a voice totally unlike her natural joyous tones: "Come, Madame, let us hasten home. I believed something has happened to May!"

I laughed at her; but the same time a thought of horror flashed across my mind; the thought of the loaded pistol, and the three children alone in the house; but I did not give utterance to my fear, for I did not wish to augment her increasing distress. When we had approached within a square of the house, we saw a large crowd collected before it. I glanced toward her. A look of agony swept over her face; and throwing up her arms, she gave utterance to a heart-rending shriek;

and it was with great difficulty that I supported her, until a gentleman came to my assistance, and we carried her home. A policeman stood before the door of her room and denied us admittance, until I assured him that she alone had the right to be there.

Oh, the terrible, the sickening sight that met the poor mother's gaze. The beautiful child, who, but a short time before basked in the sunshine of happiness and youth, now lay, a pallid, soulless form upon the floor, the sweet voice forever hushed. The beautiful eyes, through which the wondering soul had gazed, forever closed; the little, loving heart forever stilled, while the gentle spirit that had animated her breast, had flown all too suddenly to its home in the courts of Heaven; who can describe the anguish of that mother's heart? The sunshine of her life was suddenly stricken away, and sorrow and gloom filled its place. Her darling was gone—forever gone—and from her cold, senseless form she turned to her little son, the involuntary author of the frightful deed, only to find him a raving maniac, unconscious of ought save the horror before him.

Miss Leila, whose health was extremely delicate, bore up under the sad trials surrounding her, much better than her friends expected; and strove to comfort her stricken mother, with, sweet, simple words of love and hope. But, alas, what words can stem the tide of such anguish!

They may encourage the fainting heart; they may persuade to deeds of love and mercy, or to acts of murderous purpose; they may dissuade from guilt; but when offered as solace and comfort to the heart bereft of its loved ones by the cruel hand of death, they are useless and impotent.

Miss Leila was betrothed to a young man, who was now absent from the city, but expected every hour to return on the steamer "Evening Star," and who had, in consequence of his relation to her, assumed the place of protector to the family.

Mrs. Hunt and myself went upon board the steamer as soon as it arrived, to convey to him the sad intelligence, and

request him to hasten to the house, where his presence would give support and relief to the bereaved family.

The preparations being made for the last sad attentions to the beloved dead, the hour was fast approaching for the precious dust to be borne to its last resting-place, when, to my consternation and dismay, it was discovered that my little Fifi was missing. Where was the child? She had never absented herself before, and her absence at such a time was strange and incomprehensible. Just as I was about to leave all and search for her, she came in. The little innocent had remembered her promise to her beloved playmate May, and had been to the house of an old man who resided at the distance of a mile and a-half from our house, to obtain some white Cape jessamine to place upon the coffin. She came in with her face flushed with fatigue, and the fear of being too late; and her arms full of the graceful sprays hung with the pure, fragrant blossoms. Reverently we placed them about the still, shrouded form; and amid tears and sobs it was consigned to its last resting-place in the silent tomb. We returned to the home once so blithe and sunny, but now desolated and filled with gloom, only to find that a new terror reigned there.

Little Alfred, who had never recovered from the horror of the shock received when he saw his sweet sister weltering in her blood, was raving in all the wildness of hopeless insanity. His brain was very sensitive and delicate; but as he had always seemed to be of an elastic and cheerful temperament, for a long time his friends and his devoted mother hoped that he would recover, and regain his former brilliancy of mind; but no; he sunk from excited ravings to gentle melancholy, and now, at this present time, is a hopeless idiot. The few thoughts that still linger in the inward temple of the intellect, seem to centre on his beloved sister, and the only definite idea that still clings to him is, that he was his sister's murderer. He wanders about the house, murmuring in plaintive accents, that would melt the strongest heart: "I killed little May." His poor mother has realized, in all its force, the truth of the

saying, "a living sorrow is harder to bear than death;" and has shed more bitter tears over the ruined intellect of her boy, than over the grave of his little sister.

Soon after this sad occurrence, Miss Leila married. Mrs. Weibling could no longer remain at her old home, where she had been bereft of her treasures; so, at the urgent solicitation of her daughter and her husband, she went to reside with them. I hope she has found peace and happiness, for surely all the blessings of earth should descend upon her. Never did she turn a deaf ear to the cry of distress; and her ready sympathy was always offered to the afflicted, and her purse was open to their want. May God bless and protect her wherever she is.

## CHAPTER LI.

### CHANGE OF POSITION.

AFTER bidding a sad adieu to my pleasant home, I sought another in the family of Dr. White, on Carondelet Street. What a miserable fate was mine. No sooner was I settled in some pleasant spot, and formed happy associations, than my home would be broken up, invaded by the remorseless spoiler, death, and I would be driven forth to seek a new resting-place.

Dr. White's widowed daughter, Mrs. Smith, was residing with him. She was a highly accomplished lady, and extremely amiable and social in her disposition. She became at once interested in my welfare, and contributed in every way to my comfort. We became very much attached to each other, and my life once more flowed on evenly and peacefully.

I had been an inmate of my new home but a short time, when I received a visit from a gentleman, Dr. Shaver, whom I remembered as having met at the ball given by Mrs. Gene-

ral Banks. I related to him the misfortunes that had befallen my friend, Mrs. Weibling, and the cause of my removal.

He seemed to feel deeply for the sorrow of the unhappy mother, but remarked :

"Madame, I feel a deep sympathy for Mrs. Weibling, but I assure you my sympathies are more strongly interested in your behalf. I did not know your history at the time that I first met you; but since then, I have had the good fortune of meeting with a gentleman from Yazoo City, Mr. Harmer, who made me acquainted with all the particulars of your life."

"Oh," I cried, "do you know Mr. Harmer; the husband of the lady who befriended me in the darkest hour of my adversity? How long since you saw him, Dr. Shaver?"

"About six weeks," he replied. "He also informed me of a fact, of which, I presume, you are still in ignorance; which is, that Dr. Hilton had been killed in Virginia, in one of the recent battles, and his remains had been brought home to Canton, Miss., and buried there."

I was shocked, and stricken dumb for the time being.

The man who had so greatly injured me was then dead; and at that moment, I forgot all, save that he was also the man who had once loved me; and whom I loved. But he was the husband of another—the father of another woman's children, and I, who had been denied the right to love him, had not the right to mourn for him.

With these thoughts in my mind, I strove to subdue my feelings, and continue the conversation with Dr. Shaver, which, during our interview, partook of a serious cast; although I did not dream for a moment, that I had an abiding-place in his heart, which obtuseness on my part afterward embarrassed me. He said:

"Madame, you are now a widow, in fact having been one virtually for a long time. You are still young, and very pretty."

"Yes" I replied, "I am a widow; but somehow the name

sounds even more sorrowful to me, than did that of 'deserted wife,' which I have borne for many years. But it does not belong to me to grieve. My eyes are not the ones to weep for him."

"No, Madame;" he said, gravely. "You would do wrong to yourself and your child, to mourn for one who has treated you so basely."

"But he loved me once," I murmured.

"Love does not die so soon, Madame;" and then by degrees he led the conversation into a more sentimental channel, and confessed that since the eventful party he had felt a very deep interest in me, and would willingly take upon himself the responsibility of lightening my troubles, by sharing them with me.

He expressed himself very tenderly, but his words fell upon a deaf ear; my thoughts were more of the dead than of the living, and I was not prepared so soon to entertain the idea that I was again an eligible candidate for matrimony. I made him understand this, without giving him offence; and with mutual good wishes, we separated.

As was my custom, I confided all this to my friend, Mrs. Smith. She advised me, before receiving any attention from Dr. Shaver, to ascertain what character he bore, who were his family, and what was his position in society. I did not think it necessary, for I was not sufficiently interested to make many inquiries, but this much I learned:

All who knew him, spoke in his praise; he was highly respected by all the Trustees and Directors of the school, who placed the most implicit confidence in him. He was, however, a comparative stranger in the city—his family all residing in New York.

On the Thursday following, he called again; and during the conversation that ensued, he said—alluding to the fact of his short residence in New Orleans:

"Madame, you must not regard me as a stranger, because this is but the fifth or sixth time that I have been blessed with your charming society. Although I have seen you but

seldom, yet I have known you much longer than you imagine."

I told him that it was my intention to leave New Orleans very soon, and seek a home in the metropolis of the great West. I had been told that it would be easier for me to obtain classes in French in St. Louis, and I felt it my duty to go. But before I bade a final adieu to the sunny South, my heart would not be satisfied, unless I paid a visit to the grave of him who was my husband. Death is a great leveler, and I had forgiven all, and deemed that it was but just that I should take my child to shed a tear over the grave of her father.

It is true, I would rather know that he was there, in the tomb which could not give him back, than know that he was seeking in the arms of another forgetfulness of me and mine.

Dr. Shaver listened very attentively to my plans, and expressed much regret at my anticipated departure. He desired me, before leaving, to make investigations regarding his credentials, and think favorably of him; adding:

"Madame, while I live, you shall not suffer; you will find me to be both faithful and true. I am going now to Parish St. Bernard, and you shall soon hear from me;" and with a courteous adieu, he left me.

In a few days, I received from him the following letter, which I found to be an open declaration:

"MY DEAR LADY:—I cannot rest until I receive your final decision upon a matter which has come to be the prominent idea of my life.

"I have not wealth to lay at your feet, but my heart is filled with pure and unsullied love for you, and such an offering no woman can despise, although she may not accept it. I would esteem myself indeed blessed, in possessing you as a companion for life. I will not deceive you in regard to my circumstances. I have lost much by the late war, and have barely a competency; perhaps I am selfish in asking you to make such a sacrifice as to share my humble lot, for some one more blessed than I, possessed of wealth and position, may even now be worshipping at your shrine—some one who is

better able than I to place you in the high place you were destined by nature to adorn. But I will not vex myself with fears that may be idle. I surrender my heart to your keeping, for you are the embodiment of my brightest dream. May I not beg you to accord me a speedy answer?

"Yours, devotedly,

H. SHAVER."

To this letter, I returned the following answer:

"DR. H. SHAVER—Dear Sir:—I am in receipt of your kind and very complimentary letter, the contents of which are highly flattering to me. It is necessary for me to give this matter some consideration. I will therefore defer making a decision, for a short time. I will 'take counsel of my thoughts,' and would prefer acquainting you with the result in person. Will it be convenient for you to call upon me next Saturday, at four o'clock? I shall be disengaged at that hour, and shall be most happy to see you.

"Respectfully,

LAURE HILTON."

I felt in duty bound to act honorably toward this gentleman, whose motives were so honorable toward me.

"No, no," I said to myself. "I must not give my hand without my heart;" and, in the stillness and solitude of my room, in the darkness and silence of night, I searched the inmost recesses of my heart. Thus I soliloquized:

"Dr. Hilton has been dead for nearly two years. True, I did not know it until recently, so that the thought that he no longer exists is new to me; but he has been dead to me for many years. Time has flown rapidly away, bringing in its flight many changes. Can I forget all the sufferings of the past, and trust myself to one, who may, perhaps, follow the example of him who was the lover of my youth? Ah! too fresh are all the vows and expressions of love, sworn and uttered to me so long ago, for me to desire a renewal of them from strange lips. And yet, beautiful and sweet as they were, they brought me suffering and sorrow immeasurable. Oh, the recollection of those golden moments which flashed like a meteor across the horizon of my happy youth fills me with longing and grief unutterable. I am comparatively happy now;

negatively so, at least. Shall I place in the hands of any man the power to wreck my happiness again, and teach me a new lesson in suffering and despair?

"But I must not be unjust to the man now pleading for my hand. Surely God would not permit two beings created in His image to act thus falsely toward one poor little mortal. No. Perhaps in this life proffered to me is my recompense for all my former sufferings. In this future life, which may be mine, I see peace and quiet for my child and myself; protection and loving words; some one to lean upon and care for us; but, do I love him? Can I conscientiously place my hand in his, and say, 'I will be your wife?' Oh, I do not know. I cannot tell." And so I tossed restlessly on my pillow throughout the long, long night; and, when morning came, I was no nearer a decision than when I first gave the subject my consideration.

During the day I confided to my friend, Mrs. Smith, the whole affair. I told her of the conquest I had made; of his entire devotion and ardent protestations of love; and I appealed to her for advice. It is a peculiarity of mine always to seek the counsel of some one in whom I confided and trusted, for mine is a dependent nature; naturally timid, and developed to strength only by cruel circumstances. I told her all my doubts, all my hopes, and then awaited her judgment. Mrs. Smith was not sparing in her expressions of admiration for the noble-hearted man; and she said:

"Madame, you would never do better than to accept the hand of one who evidently loves you so truly, and who would place you in such an honorable position. No one commands more than he the respect of the people; and you should have a protector for life for yourself and little Ffine. Why do you hesitate? My advice to you is to accept him at once."

"Ah, Mrs. Smith, I find that the wound in my heart is still sore and hard to heal."

"Oh, Madame," she answered; "you must not fancy that, because one man proved false to you, and unworthy of your love, that another one would prove the same. God has sent you

this chance for happiness as a balm to heal every wound. You should be thankful that your husband was taken from the arms of the one who robbed you of your happiness — who filled the place in his heart that was once all your own."

Mrs. Smith's advice, in purport, coincided with that given me by all my friends; and I waited impatiently for Saturday to arrive, so that the dreaded interview might be over; but I received a note from Dr. Shaver, in answer to my own, saying that business engagements rendered it impossible for him to come to me on Saturday, but that he would be with me on Monday. The interval was passed by me in alternate doubt and hope. At one moment, I was disposed to accept him, and the next I had firmly decided to positively reject him. The contest in my mind was an equal combat. The forces on either side were numerous and powerful.

## CHAPTER LII.

### THE PROPOSAL.

ON Monday evening I arrayed myself in the same simple dress I wore on the sad day when I interceded in behalf of my husband's life, when an enraged crowd waited in breathless anxiety for but one word from my lips; and like an electric shock, the purpose of avenging my wrongs would have flashed into every heart, and he would have been rent limb from limb.

Yes, a word from the lips of the woman he had scorned and outraged, would have brought speedy and terrible retribution upon him; but that word remained unspoken, while a prayer for mercy was uttered in its stead.

Ah, I felt victorious when I remembered that once his life had been in my hands, and I had spared him. I knew, however, that his hasty action had been soon repented of. In the heat of excitement, passion had gotten the better of judgment, and he was not responsible for his cruel conduct.

All these thoughts, (for I had lived over again the entire scene in my imagination,) were induced by the simple act of putting on the self-same dress I had worn on that unhappy day. The thought of keeping one dress for so long a period, and still wearing it, may seem strange to my fashionable readers, (should I possess any such;) but you must remember that during the war the wardrobe of a Southern lady was renovated, not renewed or replaced; and we all learned the art of "making auld clothes look amaisht as well as new." Poverty, however, had been my chief instructor in this art.

At the appointed hour Dr. Shaver was announced, and with a renewed feeling of uncertainty, I entered his presence.

After the usual salutations were exchanged, Dr. Shaver said: "Madame, allow me to apologise for my seeming neglect in deferring my visit until to-day; but you are aware that a man of my profession cannot claim all time as his own, and consequently I had to deny myself the exquisite pleasure of seeing you until this moment. I have counted the hours since last we parted. Numbered by days, the time is short, but numbered by heart-beats, it is an eternity,"

"No apology is necessary, Monsieur. 'Business before pleasure,' always, is one of your cold English maxims, I believe; and you know these little denials only serve to pave the way to future eminence and fortune," I replied.

"Madame," Dr. Shaver said emphatically. "Madame, I am here this evening to place my destiny in your power. You can render my future happy or miserable. In my letter to you I disclosed the most ardent desire of my life. Do not answer me hastily, but remember your own sad experience; you have felt the pangs of disappointed love, and therefore I pray you deal gently with the heart in your possession; do not trifle with it as with a toy, but regard it as something sacred. You have cause, I know, to doubt the truth of man; but if you could raise the veil from my heart, you would see there unfathomable love for you gushing forth like a never-failing spring. Madame, believe me, not for all the wealth of the world, would I trifle with a heart that has been so cruelly wounded as yours."

"Nay, Dr. Shaver," I said: "Do not allude to what is past. I feel that you mistake the pity you feel for me, with that other and deeper feeling of love."

"No, Madame, pity is oftentimes the basis of love—the germ from which the plant springs full flowered, but it is never confounded with it by a heart capable of interpreting its own emotions. It is not for one so young as you, to remain buried in seclusion; and it is with the bright anticipation of bringing the sunlight of happiness to shine through the clouds of darkness that have so long hovered over you, that I have made you this avowal. Let the future fulfil the promise of the past, and let me be the medium and the sharer of the development. It is a sad thing to love, and not to be loved in return. I know your heart is capable of giving the warmest and deepest affection that a man could desire; and to possess that love, would be to possess Heaven upon earth. The fact of your devotion to one so false, only increases my interest in you; for it only illustrates the more clearly the beauty of your heart; sincerity is stamped in living letters upon your character. I thought such love existed only in the imagination of the novelist, but you are a living embodiment of the depth of a true woman's love."

Such tender words as these had never greeted my ears since those halcyon days when Dr. Hilton whispered the first sweet tones of love to which my heart had ever listened. Oh, the world was an Eden then. I had never known sorrow or care. I lived in a dream, from which I was rudely wakened, to find the joy and the sunlight gone, and darkness and desolation before me.

As I listened to the pleading of the manly voice, and gazed into the earnest eyes, lifted so hopefully to mine, the present was lost in the past; and it was no longer the new, strange suitor that I heard and saw, but "my old love—my old love, who had gone from life and me"—with an effort I aroused myself. Must I live forever in the past? did not the present exist for me? was not the future offering golden treasures to me? Ah, my heart was bitter to the very core. I had grown

Distrustful of the world, and feared even those who were the first to extend the hand of friendship to me; for, in many instances they had clasped my own with one hand, and dealt me a blow to the heart with the other.

"Dr. Shaver," I said, "your words are well and nobly spoken; and I doubt not that you mean them to be accepted in their fullest sense; but I fear that the stream of love which now gushes forth like a mighty torrent, will soon subside, and slowly and gently pass away, and you, too, will forget. I do not say this to draw forth protestations from you; but the world is full of forgetfulness; the debt of gratitude is soon paid; the secret protection of love soon loses its sweetness, and the substance is discarded for the pursuit of the shadow. The words you have uttered—the thoughts which they express will soon be forgotten, I fear. You see, I cannot so easily forget the lesson of distrust and doubt which I have learned only too well. This is why, my friend, I wish you to probe your heart to the very depths, so that you are sure that you are not deceiving, not me, but yourself. I know that you are, in every way, worthy of my acceptance; indeed, I am greatly honored by your preference; but I cannot but fear the untold future. The heart that has believed, and been deceived, grows hard and cold, and is not easily restored to life and warmth again."

My friend listened to me with patience, but renewed his pleading and repeated his arguments. My heart was not like a piece of white paper, ready to receive any new impression. No, it was like a parchment covered over with writing, which must be effaced by patient perseverance and repeated trials before new characters could be inscribed thereon. All that he said was like a dream. I doubted him and myself. I doubted my own understanding.

I said, finally:

"Dr. Shaver, I will again defer giving you a definite answer. I must more fully understand my own heart. I will go to the grave of my husband, and there, at the hallowed spot which clasps the cold form of him who was dearer to me than life, I will make my decision."

At a moment's glance, I saw that he was displeased, and did not appreciate such serious reflections; and I resolved not to expose my feelings to the unsympathizing gaze that might misjudge and condemn them. The bitterness which the heart knows is best concealed from the cold scrutiny of the careless throng.

But I did not wish to conceal the state of my feelings from him who had entreated me to trust him. The momentous question under our consideration could not be decided, if deceit in the smallest things were to impose reservations. At last he said:

"Madame, you have been very frank in your acknowledgments, and I admire your candor. I would like to accompany you on your sad visit, but before doing so, I would like to receive from you a decisive answer to my proposal. When I thoroughly understand the relations existing between us, I shall be only too happy in serving you. I should be most proud to assert to the world my right to protect you; and your sorrows will then be mine, as well as your joys. You are so young yet, you will gradually forget the past, and the capacity for joy and happiness, which now lies dormant and unfilled in your breast, will expand to full development, and a new existence will be opened to you."

"Oh, no," I cried,—"no, no, I can not, I will not forget the past. The heart that has once truly loved, kills its own life if it forgets that love. It is a suicidal act to forget the love of the past, and argues untruth and faithlessness for the future. It is time that the intensity of my love had nearly consumed my heart; but the gentle flower that is drooping and dying under the consuming rays of the burning sun, is restored to new life by the refreshing showers God sends upon it. Perhaps your affection may be that gift from God, which will inspire me with new life. I do not know. Time alone can tell."

"Well, Madame, let that hope reanimate your heart. Under the warm breath of love, your pale cheek will regain its roseate hue, and blush and bloom as the rose under the kisses



of the summer; your eyes will sparkle with new lustre, and your voice will ring with the melody of youth. Oh, why do you resist me? Your life is a very sad one. I will make it a happy one. Abandon it, I pray you. Mourning over departed hopes will not restore to you one moment's joy; but, on the contrary, such silent grief will, sooner or later, destroy the vital spark. You should try to do all in your power to prolong life, for you have a little daughter who needs daily your love and caresses. She has never known the affection and protection of a father; you have, therefore, a double duty to perform. You have been spared by God to shield her from the cruel blasts of the world's harshness, that would sweep over her, and, perchance, destroy her. Yes, Madame, if you allow your mind to remain a prey to sorrow and tears, silent grief will soon bear you away, with relentless hand, to the silent tomb. Remember, the constant falling of the drops of water in time wears away the surface of the roughest stone."

In my heart I knew that he had told me truth that could not be gainsayed; but I was too wearied and sad to prolong the conversation; I, therefore, requested him to call again on the following Thursday, when I hoped to be able to know my own mind. He said:

"It is long to wait; but, Madame, the fact that you do not give me instant dismissal gives me hope. I bid you adieu."

### CHAPTER LIII.

#### THE ENGAGEMENT.

MY friends all seemed to be delighted while planning my future happiness, for they did not deem it possible that I could do otherwise than follow their advice and accept Dr. Shaver. I was ambitious for my child's sake, and for her I

was willing to make any sacrifice. Here was an opportunity to give her a home, and ensure her comfort and happiness if I should be taken away from her. Why, then, should I hesitate? I had not deceived Dr. Shaver in any way. He knew that I had never loved but once; and that my very soul and heart were twining so closely about the grave of my dead husband, that they could never fold again the heart of living man in their embrace. I often examined my heart, to see if it were possible to rekindle the flame that had died away years ago, with a new and strange spark. I had the highest respect for Dr. Shaver; but respect is not love. I enjoyed his society more than that of any other friend I possessed. He reflected, too, the image of him I had once loved so fondly; and his every action and expression constantly reminded me of Dr. Hilton. As I thought of him and all his goodness, I felt that it would be easy to love him. The "current of my being" seemed setting toward him.

On the day preceding the one on which I had promised to give Dr. Shaver my final answer, I received a visit from Mr. Lambert, a Presbyterian minister. It was entirely unexpected by me; but I supposed that he was on his ministerial rounds, and had called with a view to enlighten my mind upon religious matters. I told him that I was a Catholic, and consequently not disposed to be influenced by a Protestant. He replied:

"Oh, Madame, I am aware that you are a Catholic; and I am tolerant enough to believe that there are Christians in all churches."

My little girl was playing upon the floor. He lifted her upon his lap and said:

"This little one must be a source of great comfort to you, Madame."

"Oh, yes, sir," I replied; "but my little girl, like her mother, has been very unfortunate. It is a sad thing for a child when it receives no welcoming kiss from the lips of a father;" and involuntarily I burst into tears.

Like a ministering angel, he whispered words of consola-

tion and encouragement to me. I tried to regain my self-control, and smother the pain that racked my heart. He divined my misery; and with words that seemed like inspiration, so full of healing were they, he talked long and earnestly. After our conversation had drifted into other channels, he said:

"Madame, you must have divined that I had some object in coming to see you other than the one of exercising my right as a minister of God to visit all those who suffer. I wish to tell you of something of which you may not be aware, and which may, perhaps, influence you in favor of one, who, as a friend, is very dear to me. Dr. Shaver I have known intimately for years; and I can truthfully say, that I consider him entitled to all honor and respect. Dr. Shaver has known you for years, Madame. He was in Memphis at the time you were so cruelly treated by your husband; and I will reveal to you a fact, which his modesty will not permit him to disclose to you. When you were about to be placed within the walls of the Asylum, he was the one who came forth, and forbade your entrance. He knew well that your being there was through the instrumentality of a man, who wished to hide his villany; and as a pretence for ridding himself of you, tried to convince the world that you were a fit subject for the home of those bereft of reason and intelligence."

"Oh," I said; "was Dr. Shaver the man who was so kind to me then? Oh, if I had known it before!"

"Yes, Madame, it was that noble man who rescued you from that fearful place. He has been watching over you, unseen and unknown, during the years that have passed since then. His whole heart is centred upon you and upon your happiness. There is no sacrifice that he would not make for you. I deem it only my duty, Madame, to advise you to accept this man, who lives but to make you happy;" and bowing, he left the room.

I was much moved by this interview with Mr. Lambert. He was so kind, so disinterested. Surely, I might "take the good the gods provided." Fate was indeed leading me to an

alliance with Dr. Shaver; and why could I not rest peacefully and calmly in the thought?

If my pride, my ambition, my friendship was satisfied, and my child provided for, surely I ought to be happy. And, another inducement, Dr. Shaver had completely entwined himself about the heart of my little Ffine. He never called without bringing her some little thing, trifling in itself, but of inestimable value in her eyes. Children's hearts are easily won, and they possess, also, a spirit of divination, which teaches them whether to accept or repel the advances that are made to them. They seem to possess an instinct, denied to older people, of looking behind the manifestation, and reading the motive which prompts it. So I, who was in the proper frame of mind for accepting all omens, saw in Ffine's attachment for Dr. Shaver, which daily grew stronger, another reason why I should accept him.

Doubtless he knew well that the little attentions which he bestowed upon my child, advanced him many steps upon the direct road to my heart; and concluded that by directing such constant attacks, from all directions, upon the fortifications, he would secure, at last, an unconditional surrender of the citadel itself.

The day came upon which I was to decide my future destiny. During the wakeful hours of the night previous, I had arrived at a partial decision. I had said to myself, "I will not be the puppet of the winds of doubt and hope any longer. I will not give my hand without my heart. I will rise superior to this weakness, and not let ambition be my ruling spirit any longer. I will act honorably, and tell him frankly that I cannot marry him, and all will then be over—the Rubicon will then have been crossed, and I shall be at peace once more." And upon this decision the morning dawned. Why is it, that some days shine out in our memory with lustre and brightness surpassing all others? I had known other days as sunny and beautiful as this one, but still, I always refer to it when thinking of the past, as perfect in all its appointments of sunshine and harmony. The soft azure of the sky was

unblemished by a cloud, and the bright beams of the king of day seemed striving to penetrate my very soul, and chase away the shadows lurking there.

With feminine vanity, for the indulgence of which I may be pardoned, I robed myself in my most becoming dress, desiring to please his eye, although I might wound his heart.

Dr. Shaver was announced, and I hastened to the parlor. He advanced to meet me, with a bright smile hovering upon his face, as he said:

"You are very charming to-day, Laure."

He had never called me Laure before; he knew it was distasteful to me, as were also any praises bestowed upon my *personnelle*; and as he ventured another very flattering speech, I begged him to desist, telling him that flattery alone had blighted my life. It had led me up the heights of love, only to be dashed over the unseen precipice, and fall crushed and bleeding on the rocks below.

"I beg your pardon, Madame, *mille fois*," he replied. "Nothing was farther from my intention, than to awaken such painful thoughts. I am to-day before you, like the criminal before the judge, waiting to receive his final sentence; and you little know with what intense anxiety I await your decision."

What perverse fate had taken possession of my heart, and overturned all the resolutions I had so firmly made only a few hours before, and dashed the calm words of denial from my mind? Was it the magic of his presence that so wrought upon me, that I answered, as much to my own after-astonishment, as to that of my readers:

"Dr. Shaver, I have reflected seriously upon this subject, and although I cannot give you the beautiful, sweet love that never animates a woman's heart but once, I feel that I can be happy with you, and that I can render you happy. If you can be satisfied with what I can give you, knowing that you will possess all that remains to me to give, I will be your wife."

"Madame, it is with gratitude and joy unspeakable, that I accept this precious gift of yourself which you have this day

given me, and be assured, you shall never, while life lasts, have occasion to regret your decision. Your happiness shall be my only thought, and I will promise to be a true father to your child. I will shield her from all dangers which the watchful eye of a parent can avert. She shall be educated, so that she will be an ornament to the most brilliant position in the world—so that she will reflect credit upon her mother, and shame upon her false-hearted father.

"Let us now, Laure, open a new page in your life's book. Let us seal up the leaves of the past, and inscribe upon the title-page of the future, 'no sorrow, save of God's bringing, shall be entered herein.' And now, may I not plead for an early consummation to our engagement? I am afraid that something may come between us—that some untoward chance may interpose between me and the realization of my dream of happiness."

I will not relate the remainder of the conversation, nor enter into the details of the trifling events, which filled the days intervening between the day of our engagement and the day appointed for our marriage. Suffice it to say, that as yet I saw no cause to regret the step I had taken; and visions of happiness, such as had not been mine for many years, again visited my heart. My friends congratulated me, and the devotion of Dr. Shaver each day increased, and was as grateful to my heart, so long unrefreshed by the breath of love, as are the summer showers to the fainting flowers in the parched valley.

## CHAPTER LIV.

### THE BROKEN ENGAGEMENT.

IT now wanted but two weeks of my wedding-day. Everything was prepared, and my dress for the occasion decided upon. One evening I sat in my room, listlessly turning

upon my finger the heavy gold ring placed there by my *fiancé*, when Mr. Lambert, the clergyman of whom I have before spoken, was announced. I had been strangely oppressed all day; a premonition of evil seemed to fill my breast. I was glad to receive Mr. Lambert, for I thought that his cheerful, pleasant conversation would dispel the shadows gathering about me, and I descended to the parlor.

Our talk, at first, was of indifferent subjects, but gradually and almost insensibly it wound through the topics of everyday mention until it reached the theme nearest to my heart, and Mr. Lambert asked me how soon Dr. Shaver and myself were to be married. I told him frankly.

"And do you love this man whom you have chosen?"

I hesitated. "No, Mr. Lambert; I respect him—I like him very, very much; I esteem him above all others, but I do not love him."

He seemed surprised, and then said: "Pardon me, Madame, but I would like to ask you some questions in reference to Dr. Hilton: were you present when he died?"

"Oh, no, sir; he died in Virginia, and had been dead many months before I was informed of it; but for many years before his death he was as a stranger to me, and another wife mourned for him as his widow."

"Madame, you say 'another wife,' were you divorced from him?"

"Yes, sir, we were divorced, so the lawyers said; but there was an agreement between Dr. Hilton and myself which no one knows but God; for He alone witnessed it. Through false and specious pleading, he forced me to sign that paper, which they called a divorce."

"And your husband married again. Did the lady whom he wedded know that you—that Dr. Hilton had a wife living at the time?"

"Yes, sir; for I wrote to her, and I know that she received the letter. I was a poor, defenceless woman, with a little child; a stranger in a strange land, ignorant of the language, and consequently easily deceived; and he thought, doubtless, that

when he cast me off to misery and want, that I would die of sorrow and starvation. But God, in his infinite mercy, spared me to my little child, and inspired me with resolution and courage to battle with life's storms, confident that I would some day be victorious over them."

Mr. Lambert listened attentively to my sad history, and when I had concluded, said, pityingly: "Poor child, you have indeed suffered much; but it is right that you should try and forget your husband, since he was so false and unkind to you. As he left you for another, he certainly must have loved her better than he loved you, and you should not bestow a single thought or regret upon one so base."

"He was the father of my child, and he is dead," I murmured.

"But he left that child to starve and perish," he said, indignantly, and then added, in a softer tone, "I know that death throws a kindly veil over the faults and sins of those we loved. I can easily see how you, supposing Dr. Hilton to be dead, can forget the depth of his villainy toward you, and almost imagine that he loved you to the last. But, Madame, he shall not be so exalted in your imagination. I have every reason to believe that you have been made the victim of a mistake. The Dr. Hilton who perished in Virginia, and whose remains were brought home to Canton and interred there, was not your husband, but an older man, resident of the latter place, but bearing the same name. Yes, Madame, Dr. Hilton is still living."

My heart ceased for the moment to throb; my body became as rigid and cold as death; animation was suspended momentarily, and I fell heavily upon the floor. It was some time before I was restored to life and vitality, but the power of speech seemed to have deserted me. Mr. Lambert was exceedingly troubled at my weak and almost lifeless condition, and strove to recall the words that had fallen so heavily upon my poor heart.

"Madame, I ought not to have told you so abruptly. Perhaps my informant was wrong. Compose yourself, I beg. I

will leave you now, but will come again as soon as I have learned facts, which can be proven, to state to you. I know not how to forgive myself for my ill-timed communication; and, in much perturbation, he bade me farewell.

Slowly and painfully I ascended the stairs leading to my room; and throwing myself upon the bed, I strove to think connectedly, and to reason with myself as to the course I must pursue. I could no longer think of marrying Dr. Shaver while Dr. Hilton was still living. No; I should have to release Dr. Shaver at once, and yet the thought cost me a bitter pang; for I knew that he loved me as I had loved Dr. Hilton; but I could not commit the sin of becoming his wife. The blow had fallen upon me, and I must inflict it in all its bitterness upon the true and noble heart I fain would shield. In my doubt and distress, I sought counsel of but one. I bent my head low upon the footstool before my Heavenly Father; and, after long and earnest prayer, I arose strengthened and resolved. My thoughts grew clear, and shaped themselves before me in definite forms.

I knew that there was a gentleman residing in the city, who had been, until recently, a resident of Yazoo City. I determined to seek him, and ask from him the information which I desired. To think was to act; and I proceeded at once to the house of Mr. Evans. The gentleman was at home, and received me very politely. Without any preliminary conversation, I plunged at once into the object of my visit.

"Mr. Evans, I have been told that Dr. Hilton was dead; that he was killed in Virginia. Can you tell me if this is so?"

"Well, Madame, I think your informant was mistaken. I know that there was a Dr. Hilton killed at the time and place to which you refer; and he was often confounded with Dr. Hilton of Yazoo; but the latter gentleman was, I assure you, alive and well two weeks ago."

"And where was he?"

"In Yazoo City; but living a miserable existence. Retired from all society, and living like a perfect misanthrope."

I thanked him sadly. It was no pleasure to me to hear such an account of one whom I had once loved; and I retraced my steps toward home with a heart as heavy as a stone in my bosom. I knew that Dr. Hilton's second marriage could be productive of nothing but misery. His desire of acquiring wealth and position by marrying had been gratified; but he had succeeded in sealing his own misery as well as mine. All his noble impulses, all his generous instincts, had been wrecked upon the shoals of inordinate avarice; and regret and remorse were the sole inhabitants of his heart.

There now remained for me to do but one thing — to give Dr. Shaver the information so unexpectedly acquired, and release him from his engagement. As for me, it was but returning to my old lonely life, which seemed more lonely by comparison with the existence of the last few weeks, when I had been surrounded by an atmosphere of tender, considerate love. Still, it was for my child's sake that I had accepted Dr. Shaver, hoping to secure for her, during her helpless years of childhood and youth, the protection of a father, and the sweet comfort of a happy home. And for my child's sake now, I could yield all the promised pleasure, and return to the old loveless life, rather than add additional disgrace to her sad portion. Poor and wretched I might be — oftentimes wanting bread itself; but a pure and unsullied life was still left to me, and with the aid of my Heavenly Father, who had so long protected me, I could go on my life-path, unmurmuring, uncomplaining, to the end.

I believed that all would yet be well with me. My child would some day reflect credit upon me, and comfort me. Her success in life would be my compensation for all I had endured.

The next day, I awaited the coming of Dr. Shaver, for whom I had sent, in anxiety and sorrow. I feared the effect of the communication I had to make, and dreaded the scene I must necessarily encounter. The mental conflict I had endured had rendered me faint and weak; and as the hour approached for his coming, my heart failed me, and I threw myself upon

the lounge, faint and trembling. My little Fifine observed my pale, troubled face, and came to my side, and said, in her sweet, childish voice:

"*Maman*, do you feel bad because I did not study my A B C's to-day? I will learn some to-morrow, dear *maman*, if you will not cry;" and she wiped away my tears with her little apron. She then added: "I know two letters now, and I will learn ever so many more to-morrow, if you will not be troubled."

Poor little innocent, how little she knew what was passing in her mother's heart. Striving to comfort me, she went on: "Tell Fifine why you feel so, *maman*. Is it about papa? Where is my papa gone?"

"Oh, you have no papa here, *mon ange*; but God, who lives up in Heaven and loves you, will be your father, if you are good and make your poor *maman* happy," I cried.

"*Maman*, do you see that lady in the yard; well, I heard her and another lady talking about you yesterday. They said you would die if you did not eat something, and stop crying so much. *Maman*, let me get you some bread."

And so the little prattler chatted on, unconsciously stabbing me, and making my poor heart bleed afresh with every word she uttered. I strove, however, to seem interested in her childish talk, and elicited little confidences from her regarding her plays and her companions. I did not wish to shadow her young brow with my sorrow, for I saw that she was troubled by my sadness, and longed to win me from it. In leading her mind away from the subject of my troubles, I soothed myself also; and when the servant came in the room, and told me that Dr. Shaver was awaiting me below, I was comparatively calm and quiet. My self-possession deserted me at once, and the tumult resumed its ungovernable sway in my bosom. My face told its own story to my lover as I met his gaze. He instantly divined that I was in trouble, and leading me to a seat, he besought me eagerly to tell him what was the matter, saying:

"What is it Laure? has anything happened? Is Fifine ill?"

or is it some new and deeper trouble? Tell me Laure; do not hesitate to lay bare your most secret pain before me."

I did not answer. He continued:

"Laure, do not hide your feelings from me; your friend is able and ready to receive any shock for you — do you not know that? I had hoped that you could meet me to-day with bright smiles and buoyant spirits, and to find you so sad, with the marks of recent tears upon your pale cheeks, grieves me to the very soul. Tell me all, Laure."

I looked up at him, but his searching glance was more than I could endure. He took my hand. I withdrew it, and burst into tears. How could I make this man so miserable at a moment when I knew I had his happiness in my power? It looked as though I was revenging myself upon an innocent man, for the cruelty Dr. Hilton had inflicted upon me. I could not marry him, but how could I tell him? When the heart feels most, the lips speak not; or if they do, only broken and disjointed sentences fall from them. "The chariot wheels jar in the gate through which you drive them forth."

At last I said: "Dr. Shaver, I have something to tell you, which I dread to say; but 'necessity knows no law,' and the words must be spoken. I have recently received information that Dr. Hilton is not dead; that he is still living, and at present in Yazoo City, consequently all is at an end between us. I am a Catholic, as you know, and my religion will not permit me to marry you while my husband is living." My words seemed to pierce his heart; and I knew from the look he gave me that the blow had fallen heavily upon him.

"Madame, I know your husband is not living."

I raised my hands to Heaven. "I have received positive information that he is, from a gentleman who saw him two weeks ago; and my thoughts are with him, as with one returned from the dead; he is unhappy — he is ill — perhaps." I could not go on. Dr. Shaver seemed surprised at the sudden change in my voice. I knew well his eyes were riveted on my face. I would not look at him, but continued talking.

"I know Dr. Hilton is not my husband in the eyes of the



world, but before the face of heaven, and all who dwell therein, the tie that once bound us remains strong and unchanged. He is the father of my child, and so long as he lives, I shall keep the vow I uttered before God and the angels, and remain true to him."

"But, Laure, if he is not actually dead and buried beneath the ground, he is dead to you, and buried in the arms of another."

"I know it—I know it," I cried; "and the sting of the knowledge is deep and sharp; but, Dr. Shaver, if I were to marry you, I should pass the rest of my life in misery. I should be the most unhappy woman in the world; my conscience would not condone my fault, and I should be wretched. Besides, I feel, since I have learned that he to whom my first and only love was given, lives, that I should be giving you a hand only—not a heart, for that has returned to its first owner. No, we must part. My respect and friendship for you are true and unbounded, and I shall always regard you as one of the truest friends woman ever had. Come! let us forget that we have been lovers, and be friends once more."

Never did a rejected lover act more nobly. I had cruelly wounded his pride, and blighted his hopes, but in his generous heart he found forgiveness for the sorrow I had given him.

"Madame," said he, (he never called me "Laure" again,) "Madame, you have this day destroyed the dearest hope of my life; you have dispelled the happy delusion upon which I have so long feasted, and now I must waken from my dream, and face stern reality. I shall never love another woman as I have you, for you were the embodiment of my dreams and aspirations—my soul's ideal; but all is over, I will not forget that you have acted from a noble sense of duty; but oh, would that fate could have spared me the anguish of this moment! Your friend, Madame, I shall always be, for time can never change my heart toward you; it will henceforth be my misery, as it has hitherto been my delight, to love you, always. Some day you will let me serve you, as your friend,

will you not? May Heaven bless you, and may every blessing fall upon your head and that of your little child."

He took my hand and looked long and earnestly in my face; and then, with a half-spoken "adieu," uttered in a trembling voice, he left me.

## CHAPTER LV.

### THE DAY BEFORE MY DEPARTURE.

A CHANGE now occurred in my circumstances, which forced me to think of leaving New Orleans. I had formed this intention some months before, but had abandoned it in consequence of my engagement to Dr. Shaver.

I had been teaching a large class in French, comprised of Northern gentlemen, who paid me liberally; but the greater number of them were obliged to leave New Orleans very suddenly, and consequently my class was broken up. I had nothing to do, and, as I could not afford to be idle, I accepted the situation of governess in a family living in South Carolina. Madame Lafire, my proposed employer, objected to receiving my little daughter, so I was obliged to place her at the *pension* of Mademoiselle B.

She had been there about two weeks, and I was on the eve of taking my departure, when she was taken very ill. For some days I had been very much depressed, and full of vague forebodings; and when I saw my little darling lying before me in a heavy stupor, with flushed face, and quick, irregular breath torturing her heaving breast, I was nearly frantic with agony, for I feared that she would not recover; and I resolved, that if God spared her to me, I would never leave her. How thankful I was that I had not already started on my journey! I realized, in the moment of her danger, how great would have been my anxiety had I been absent from her side, and wondered how I could ever have thought of



leaving my only treasure, to the care of strangers and hirelings. I was her only protector, and if I should forsake her, what would she do? Oh, I would never entertain the thought again; and I wrote at once to Madame Lafire, telling her of my change of mind, and the reasons thereof.

In a few days, however, her disease changed, more favorable symptoms made their appearance, and the physician pronounced her out of danger. I determined, as soon as she was able to be moved, to leave New Orleans, and seek a home in a strange city, far removed from the scene of my sorrows and troubles, with the hope that fortune would smile upon me, and aid me in placing myself and child beyond the reach of want.

I determined to go to St. Louis, of which place I had heard much from different residents, whom I had happened to meet, and from whom I had received offers of assistance in case I should seek that city. I did not depend much upon this, however, but as it was absolutely necessary for me to seek a new home, my thoughts turned instinctively toward the place whose praises had been sounded to me so many times.

With me, to decide was to act. I went at once to the *pension*, (I was not permitted to stay there,) to see if my little Fifiue could be removed. She was still too weak, the physician said; and bidding the girl in attendance upon her to prepare her clothing, and have it in readiness for her departure at a moment's notice, I went down to the levee, to make arrangements with the captain of one of the steamboats running between New Orleans and St. Louis for my passage. I had no money, but I determined to pawn my watch, and trust, as I had ever done, in God's goodness and mercy to provide me with a home and friends upon my arrival at my journey's end. On my way to the wharf, I met my friend, Dr. Shaver, who greeted me pleasantly and courteously, and walked with me some distance. My heart was too much absorbed by weightier matters to accord him the attention that he merited; and as he bade me adieu, a look of sadness swept over his face, the remembrance of which lingers in my memory to this day.

I was not successful in seeing the officers of the boat advertised to leave the next day; and I returned home weary and dispirited. My purpose was unshaken forever; and I went to pay a last visit to my numerous friends, and bid them farewell. They were all surprised at receiving the news of my sudden departure, and expressed much regret at parting with me. It was a sad thing for me to say good-bye to them, for that melancholy word had been but too often the seal of final, eternal separation from those that I loved. But partings, not meetings nor happy abidings, had been my lot in this world. I had never loved a friend deeply and devotedly but they were sure to die. Fate had decreed to me eternal separation from friends and kindred. Eternal, did I say? Oh, no, not that; for there is a happy realm, where change does not come, where sorrow cannot enter; and there I hope some day to be united with the dear ones who have gone, never again to know the pangs of separation and the deadly blight of tears. But, sometimes, when I thought of the loneliness, and, perhaps, deprivations, which I should have to encounter in going to a strange city, my courage failed for the moment, and my heart almost sank within me. But hope always came back again, and the old decision asserted itself. Perhaps one consideration that weighed much with me, and unconsciously influenced my determination, was the fact that I deemed it best, for many reasons, to separate myself entirely from my friend, Dr. Shaver. It no longer afforded me pleasure to know that he was ever near me; for I was but too conscious of his feelings toward me, and knew that they had undergone no change. Consequently, it was best for both parties to see each other no more; and as I wished to preserve intact the sweet bond of friendship between us, I could not withdraw my presence from him completely without offence, unless many miles of distance were between us.

## CHAPTER LVI.

## MY DEPARTURE FOR ST. LOUIS.

I TOOK passage upon the "Lady Gay" for St. Louis. This boat was one of the finest, the most magnificent, in fact, then running upon the Mississippi River.

I was very sad as I watched the receding shores of the city which had so long sheltered me, and I remained upon the guards watching them, until conscious that my sad face and tearful eyes were attracting the attention of many of the passengers. I was obliged to offer the captain my watch, the last relic that I possessed of former days; but I had no money, and so I was compelled to part with my last treasure.

I had a more pleasant trip than I had anticipated. I formed the acquaintance of an exceedingly lovely woman, a Mrs. May, whose attention was drawn to me by hearing my little Fifine play a beautiful waltz upon the piano. Fifine possessed a remarkable talent for music; and, although so very young, she already executed many rather difficult pieces very well. Strangers were always attracted at once by her playing; for it seemed strange to them that one so young should excel in the wonderful and difficult art of music. She was *tres petite* also, which made her seem even younger than she was.

Mrs. May's gentle, caressing manner to my darling, and her politeness to me, quite won my heart; and I soon realized that I had found in her a true friend. She said to me, after our acquaintance had ripened to cordiality and confidence:

"Madame, I think you have the saddest face I ever knew. You must have encountered many trials and much sorrow, or the deep lines of grief about your mouth, and the shadows around your eyes, tell a false tale."

"Yes, Mrs. May," I replied, "I have known but little joy. Smiles and gladness have been strangers to my poor heart for

many years; and I see but dark clouds and deep shadows in the future. Oh, why is it that the sunlight of happiness falls only on a few hearts, when the blessed sunshine of God's heaven falls on all alike?"

"Ah, my child, that is a question we must not ask. We must not seek to know the windings of 'His mysterious way.' Can you not confide in me, Madame, and tell me your history; for I know it must be full of interest? I can give you sympathy at least."

I complied unhesitatingly with her request; and I never received sweeter or more heartfelt sympathy than she accorded me. It seemed as though her heart responded to mine with quick earnestness. There was a kindred chord in our natures that awakened into one sweet harmonious sound. There was a gentleman on board, who was very desirous of becoming acquainted with me. This desire being made known to me, as also the fact of his being from a small place near Canton, I permitted the introduction; and he was presented to me as Mr. Miller. After some little conversation, I asked him if he was acquainted with Dr. Hilton. He replied:

"I was, Madame; but you are doubtless aware of the fact of his death. I was present at his funeral in Canton, his body having been brought there for interment."

I was astounded. I questioned Mr. Miller closely, and found him very positive as to the fact of the decease of Dr. Hilton, and also as to the identity of the dead man with that of the Dr. Hilton, once a resident of Yazoo City, and who had married Miss C——s, of Canton. I could doubt no longer; and, retiring to my state-room, I reflected long and deeply upon the contradictory reports that I had heard.

How could I reconcile the statements of Mr. Evans and Mr. Miller? I could only conclude that Mr. Evans was deceived, when he thought he saw my husband in Yazoo, for I knew he had no object in deceiving me. The doubt as to his existence was a painful one. To know that he was living was to give him a locality in my thoughts; to know that he was dead, was to raise a grave to weep over; but uncertainty as to the one

or the other nearly rendered me wild. I decided that I would go to Yazoo, and ascertain for myself what was the truth. At that moment his image was before me, wearing the bright smile that ever woke a response of love in my heart, in the happy days of yore; and my thoughts roamed at will through the enchanted land of memory, and consigning to the waters of Lethé all the sorrow and suffering he had caused me, seized only upon the happiness and joy he had given. But, oh, how sad the wakening from such reveries! I found that solitude, in bringing me my sorrows for companions, was also bringing back the pain to my heart and the pressure to my brain, and so I sought diversion in the society of my new friend, Mrs. May. The day was transcendently beautiful. The river was calm and quiet, undisturbed save only by the swift, underlying current, against which our brave boat was forcing its way. The shores on either side were low and level, and huge trees raised their giant trunks aloft, while from their long branches the gray Spanish moss hung like funereal garments, waving to and fro, seemingly by some volition of its own, for there was no breeze to stir it. Far ahead of us the river lay, shining in the sunlight, like a sleeping giant, giving no idea of its strength and power. The Mississippi River is magnificent, only when you think of its great length; of its springing to life in the grand country of the Rocky Mountains, and flowing from the far confines of civilization through vast uncultivated plains, through populous countries, past vast cities and quiet country-places down to the very bosom of commerce, until its waters mingle with broad Atlantic.

Mrs. May and myself sat for a long time, enjoying the beauty of the day, and the calm tranquillity of the hour. The blue vault above us seemed, from the unusual clearness of the atmosphere, to be farther away from us than usual; and while remarking this fact to my friend, I recalled that other day, as beautiful and bright as this one, when Dr. Hilton bent lovingly over me, and, with his eyes beaming with passionate admiration, and the accents of his voice tremulous with love and tenderness, swore that the heavens would fall before he should cease to love me, or forget me.

My little Ffine was sitting upon my lap, and kept us both busy replying to her *naïve* and innocent questions. While we were thus employed, a gentleman approached, and with a start of surprise uttered my name, and advanced toward me with extended hand. I recognized him at once as a Mr. Robertson, a near neighbor of Colonel Hilton's on Silver Creek, and was as much surprised as himself at the unexpected *rencontre*. He exclaimed:

"Madame Hilton! Is it possible I have the pleasure of seeing you? Why, I thought you were dead. I am sure I heard so."

"Very likely, sir; but you see I am still alive. It is true that my sufferings have been sufficiently great to crush the proudest spirit, and break the strongest heart; yet I have lived through it all. God has spared me for some wise purpose, I have no doubt; but life is a poor boon to me, and but for my child, I would pray that it might not be prolonged."

"Yes, Madame, your life has been a very sad one, I know; but 'after the night comes the morning,' and you must hope that your morning will soon dawn. May I ask, Madame, where you are going?"

"I left New Orleans," I replied, "with the intention of proceeding directly to St. Louis; but I have now concluded to go to Yazoo City, and afterwards to Canton. I shall never be at rest until I visit the grave of my husband. That spot is a magnet which draws my heart toward it; and I shall expend my last cent in obeying the impulses of my spirit."

"Why, Madame, have you been married since your divorce from Dr. Hilton?"

"No, sir," I replied, indignantly.

"Do I understand you to mean that you are going to visit the tomb of Dr. Hilton?"

"Yes, sir; such is my intention."

"Why, Madame, you are laboring under a strange delusion. I saw Dr. Hilton three days ago, and had a long conversation with him. He was perfectly well at that time."

I was astounded. What a shuttle-cock was fate making

of me—throwing me from hope to despair with these tales of life and death!

I told Mr. Robertson of the contradictory reports I had heard concerning Dr. Hilton's death in Virginia. The cause of this he explained to me, as Mr. Evans had done, and in the same manner. I then asked if his second wife was alive, and if he was living with her. Mr. Robertson replied:

"Oh, yes, Madame; but I am sorry to say that he is making her, also, very unhappy—for he is drinking to excess; he seems a very slave to liquor."

It was very painful to me to hear this, and I said: "Oh, I believe he is sorry for what he has done, and he is striving to drown his remorse and regret. The remembrance of my desolated life, and of his poor, forsaken little child, must haunt him day and night, I know; but oh, I am so grieved that he has wrecked another life, for although his wife occupies the place and position that should be mine alone, yet I wish her all happiness."

I took my little Ffine, and retired to my room. I pressed her again and again to my heart, and whispered, as though the knowledge brought peace and hope, "*Mon ange*, your father is living—oh, he is not dead."

But in the recital of my feelings, and the repetition of my emotions, doubtless I weary my readers; but oh, have patience with me, I pray you. I had "lived, with visions for my company," so long,—love and happiness being strangers to my actual life, and visitants only to my dreams and fancies,—that I had ever retained my husband upon the pedestal to which I had exalted him in my earliest days of wedded love—those blissful days, the reality of which was more beautiful than any dream that had since blessed my poor heart. When I thought of facts, I awoke to the cruel consciousness that he whom I worshipped was lost to me forever—had left me in scorn and bitterness, to suffering and starvation; but in my dreams he was still loving and gentle, and in them only I was content. When I thought he was dead, I mourned for him; and when I knew that he was alive, my heart returned to its

dreams, and built hopes for the coming time, when he would love me again. I know that in his inmost thoughts he regarded me as the pure, unsullied embodiment of his first love; when he arraigned me before the tribunal of his heart, I knew that he would do me involuntary justice, and, in spirit at least, would return to his allegiance.

Mrs. May resided in Memphis, and the time was fast approaching when we were to be separated. I had become much attached to this estimable lady, and I looked forward with sorrow and regret to the hour of our parting. She tendered me a cordial, earnest invitation to visit her at her own home, but I told her that I never wished to enter Memphis, that hated place, again. Every street was associated with the memory of the weary search for my child, and every remembrance connected with it was of suffering and horror. She promised to write to me at an early day, which promise, I may add here, she faithfully fulfilled. The last hour of our happy companionship approached, and as she bade me good-bye, she handed me a small package, saying:

"Here is a present for your little daughter, Madame. I desired to give her some little token of remembrance, and should have offered it in some other form, had it been practicable; but perhaps it is best as it is, for it may be of service to you when you reach St. Louis. Good-bye, and God bless you!" and she was gone.

It seemed to me that this dear friend had been sent to me as a ministering angel, for, on opening the package, I found that it contained twenty dollars; and so the fear of immediate want and suffering was taken from me, and my heart bounded lightly in my bosom, relieved of a part of its burden.

I have always felt that God watches over me with especial love and care. When poverty and pain filled my days with gloom and my nights with horror, and starvation seemed inevitable, by some unforeseen, unexpected means my wants would be supplied, and from some unknown quarter kind friends would come and comfort me.

## CHAPTER LVII.

## THE ARRIVAL IN ST. LOUIS.

THE time glided by monotonously, and unmarked by any event worth recording, until we reached St. Louis.

As the boat rounded to at the busy wharf, and I saw everybody on board making preparations for departure, I experienced a renewed sense of desolation and loneliness. The passengers thronged into the cabin, wearing happy, expectant faces; and soon the sweet sound of joyful greetings was heard, as waiting friends hastened on board to welcome the long expected ones. I alone seemed cut off from the sweet solace of friendship and companionship. No welcome waited for me, the poor "little French lady;" and taking my little Fifine by the hand, alone and unattended, I left the boat, and, following the directions given me by the captain, sought one of the principal hotels, intending to remain there long enough to "look about me," as the phrase goes, and seek some means of support.

I determined to place Fifine at once in the convent, and, for the first time in my life, was strongly impelled to seclude myself from the world and its cares, in the same holy retreat. But I knew that such peace and quietness were not for me—no! I must, for my child's sake, battle with life as best I might, nor seek to evade the trials sent unto me. I must not play the part of a coward, and seek my own rest and quiet at the expense of my child's; for if I sought the seclusion of the convent, she would be left to the mercy of the storms from which I, her mother and sole protector, should shield her.

The day following my arrival I took my child, and proceeded to the Visitation Convent, determining to leave her there, and seek a situation as governess. The Mother Superior received me kindly, and listened attentively and sympathetically to so much of my sad story as I deemed it best to

impart. Her heart was touched with compassion, and she at once offered to receive Fifine, and supply her with suitable clothing, which she needed very much; for there was a striking contrast between the cold, chilly winds of the North, and the genial, balmy breezes of the South, and my child was but poorly prepared to encounter the sudden change. I knew only too well my total inability to furnish the necessary changes in her wardrobe which her health and comfort demanded, and the proffered kindness of the Mother Superior was eagerly accepted,—but it was a sad thing to me to be separated from my darling for even a little time. I felt that, with her in my arms or by my side, I could endure any trial, however severe; but away from her, my hope and courage alike failed, strength deserted me, and despair alone reigned in my heart.

But "necessity knows no law," and I was forced to say good-bye to my little darling, grateful for the shelter afforded her, although sorrowing at the prospect before me, when, bereft of her sweet presence, I should plod on my weary way alone and un comforted. I whispered to her many words of encouragement, and cheered her with the bright hope of soon coming for her, and taking her to live with me once more, when we would be happier than ever; but even while I uttered the hopeful words, my heart sunk within me, and I tore the little, clinging arms from my neck and hastened away, that she might not see the tears I could no longer restrain, and which relieved the anguish in my heart. I returned to my solitary room, which seemed doubly so, uncheered by the childish presence which was my greatest joy on earth.

That night was a sorrowful one. In my dreams I saw ever before my gaze the fair face of her who filled my place in my husband's arms; and as I met her piercing glance, the old fever of love would be rekindled in my heart, and the emotions of revenge and despair would fill my soul; and, awaking from my troubled slumber, the old misery would seize upon my waking thoughts, until the darkness grew terrible, and I longed for the daylight to steal in and frighten away the

ghostly visitants that surrounded me. I determined to write to Dr. Hilton. I said to myself, "Yes, he shall be constantly reminded that I, whom he has so cruelly abandoned, still live; he shall know all my misery and grief. If he be happy, I will intrude the shadow of my wretchedness between him and his happiness; he shall not forget me;" and acting upon my determination, I wrote him a long letter, filled with bitterest reproaches and harrowing complaints. This was an unpardonably foolish act, I know, but it relieved my mind for the time.

My mind had been too severely taxed during the preceding week, and I suffered the consequences; for I was attacked by fever, and for two weeks was seriously ill. The ladies in the hotel were very kind to me; and one in particular, Mrs. Davis, I remember with sincerest gratitude.

As soon as I was able to leave my room, I went to see my little girl, and found her very well and contented. I asked the Mother Superior to aid me in obtaining a situation, and showed her my letters of recommendation. She promised to assist me if it was possible, and in a few days she fulfilled her promise. I received a message from her, desiring me to come at once to the convent. I hastened to her, and she informed me that she had received a visit from a Mr. Dumont, who was a very wealthy gentleman from Indianapolis, to whom she had mentioned me; and he at once told her that he knew me by reputation, having heard of me in the South. He also said that he knew a family who desired such services as those which I proposed to render; that they would give the highest salary, in order to obtain a good French governess, and that I could accompany him at once on his return.

Mr. Dumont had called at the convent to see about placing his young sister there, (who was then with his mother, at the Southern Hotel.) He desired to pay the tuition fees, which were five hundred dollars, in advance; and gave for this purpose a check for six hundred dollars, receiving in return a hundred dollars in money.

I was overjoyed at the prospect before me; and thanking

the good Sister, I hastened home to make my preparations for departure.

Mr. Dumont called upon me that evening, presenting a letter of introduction from Sister Seraphine, and I found him to be a most pleasant gentleman, possessing an exceedingly handsome, elegant *personnel*, and with a most winning address. He expected to leave the next day; and, won by his arguments and the positive promise of immediate employment, I decided to go with him. I had wavered in my mind concerning the propriety of my going so far from my little child; but when I thought of the proposed salary, and realized that I could procure so many comforts and even luxuries for my child, I deemed it my duty to sacrifice my own feelings and accept this offer which Providence so unexpectedly thrust upon me.

We left at the appointed hour, and the next morning reached (as I supposed) our destination, and went at once to the hotel.

Mr. Dumont conducted me to the parlor, where he left me; and soon after a waiter entered to accompany me to a room, which Mr. Dumont had ordered to be prepared for me.

I said to the waiter: "Indianapolis is a smaller city than I expected to see."

"Indianapolis, Miss?" he said. "This is n't Indianapolis, it's Springfield."

I was astonished, and could not understand how this change had occurred in our programme without my cognizance. I hastened back to the sitting-room, where a large railroad map was suspended upon the wall, and found that we were just the same distance from Indianapolis (or about the same) that we were when in St. Louis.

Mr. Dumont came in soon after, and I eagerly questioned him. He explained matters to me by saying, that he was obliged to take Springfield in his route, as he had business of importance with General B——, which he was obliged to attend to; and added, that he supposed he had mentioned the matter to me. We would remain there, he said, until the next morning, when we would proceed to Indianapolis. I was but half satisfied with this explanation, but was obliged to



remain content, although doubts of the integrity of Mr. Dumont began to creep into my mind, and make me restless and uneasy.

The day passed slowly away; but in the evening my friend made himself very agreeable—read Tennyson to me, and impressed me so forcibly with his sincerity, that I secretly reproached myself for my doubts. But to my great astonishment, Mr. Dumont grew sentimental and affectionate, and desired me, without further preliminaries, to become his wife.

"Mr. Dumont!" I exclaimed, "you forget yourself strangely! Why, I do not know anything about you!"

"No, Madame; but I know all about you. I have been acquainted with the details of your story, which I learned from friends in the South, for years, but I never expected to meet you; but since I have had that exquisite pleasure, I feel that you are my destiny—my fate. I lay my heart at your feet; do with it as you will—nay, do not speak, Madame. I am very wealthy; I have been blessed with a large proportion of this world's goods, and I will make you rich beyond your utmost expectations."

I knew not what to say to my importunate suitor. To be relieved of his presence was my greatest care. He continued his assurances, and also told me that he was a member of Congress, and was going at once to Washington, whither he would be proud to take me, and where I should reign a very queen of society. At last I compromised the matter, by requesting to defer my answer until the morning, and so we separated.

At an early hour the following morning, Mr. Dumont presented himself at my door to conduct me to breakfast. After the meal was over, we entered the parlor, and he asked me if I could not give him my decision now upon the important matter we had discussed the evening previous. I answered:

"Yes, sir. It is impossible for me to contemplate any feeling stronger than friendship with one whom I have known so short a time, or any alliance beyond that of mere social relation. We will not refer to the subject again, if you please. It is distasteful to me."

"Well, Madame, I must accept this decision for the present; but I hope the future will change your determination. I must now go and secure our tickets;" and bowing, he left me. As he passed the parlor-window by which I was sitting, he lightly blew me a kiss from the tips of his fingers.

Need I tell my readers, who are doubtless keener-eyed than I was, and possessed of more discernment, that I never saw Monsieur Dumont again?

I waited in vain for his return, and my situation was embarrassing in the extreme. He had paid neither his own bill nor mine, and was denounced by the landlord as an impostor, while I was considered his accomplice. I had no money, and my story was received with sneers and utter disbelief. I wrote to Sister Seraphine at once, and at my earnest entreaties, the landlord permitted me to remain at the hotel until an answer was received. It came by the return mail, and contained the money for defraying my bill at the hotel and to bring me back to St. Louis; but up to the time of my departure I was regarded with suspicion, and treated with the utmost contempt; and I presume that to this day they still detail this incident, in which I was made to play a part, and always give me an equal share of opprobrium and scorn.

What were the motives of Mr. Dumont in urging me to marry him, I do not pretend to know—doubtless *il s'amuse*—but he certainly succeeded in placing me in one of the most embarrassing and unpleasant positions which it was ever my ill fortune to occupy.

## CHAPTER LVIII.

### MY SAFE RETURN TO THE CONVENT.

ON reaching St. Louis, I went at once to the convent, and acquainted Sister Seraphine with the result of my unfortunate trip. She congratulated me on my safe return, but was



disposed to think that Mr. Dumont had not intended to leave me so unceremoniously, but feared that something had befallen him — that he had met with some accident.

"For," said she, "he was such a gentleman, and we knew that he belonged to one of the best and wealthiest families in Indianapolis."

"No, no, Sister," I said, "do not believe it. He is an impostor, I am sure. Has his sister come to the convent yet?"

"No; she is still at the hotel, I presume. But we have the money for her tuition for a year, or a check for it, which is just as good; and that fact proves to me that he is what he represented himself to be."

"Did you not give him some money, Sister?"

"Yes; he had made out a check for six hundred dollars, thinking that amount to be the sum we demanded for a year's tuition; and when I told him it was but five hundred, he was quite embarrassed, for he had no other check with him; but I made it all right, for I gave him a hundred dollars in money. It amounts to the same thing, you know, for I still have the check."

"Yes, Sister; but I fear that you will find the check to be worth no more than the paper upon which it is written; and you will never see Mr. Dumont's sister, or recover your hundred dollars."

It is needless to add that my prophecy proved to be a true one. The check was returned unhonored from New York; and the Dumont family utterly disclaimed any knowledge of the unworthy scion so suddenly engrafted upon their family-tree.

Poor Sister Seraphine, simple-minded and innocent, ignorant of the wiles and deceits of the wicked world, was much chagrined at finding that she had been the dupe of a base adventurer. We never heard of Mr. Dumont again. This unprincipled personage, *née* Smith or Jones, most probably has, it is to be hoped, been translated to a proper sphere, where his peculiar talents are rightly appreciated, and he can exercise his faculties in the contemplation of his past life.

I again began to contemplate the project, formerly abandoned, of retiring to the convent; and I poured into the sympathizing ears of Sister Seraphine my hopes and desires. I explained to her that it made me wretched to be parted from my only child, and, unless I could find some situation where I could have her with me, I would rather come to the convent, and there end my days in peace and solitude. My little one could grow to womanhood under my own eye; and when she desired to leave the shelter of the holy walls, she would be protected against the cruel snares of the world by all the influences of religion and love, and would remember me with the truest, deepest affection.

Sister Seraphine listened to all my dreams and hopes, but said she did not believe that I had a vocation for the convent.

"Confess now," she said, "have not the charms of the world a strange fascination for you? Is it not necessity and deprivation that has inspired you with the desire of seeking a refuge among us?"

I frankly told her that she was correct, and we dismissed the subject. I returned to my room, and thought long and earnestly upon the subject. The night passed slowly away, and the brightness of the morning that followed seemed to deepen, by its contrast, the gloom in my heart.

Early in the forenoon, I received the following note from Sister Seraphine:

"DEAR MADAME HILTON:—I have reflected upon your expressed wish of retiring from the world and seeking refuge in a convent. Such a desire, if it be heartfelt and earnest, deserves all due attention; and I am empowered to offer you a home, for the present at least, within our walls, where you can remain until you fully comprehend your own mind, or until some suitable occupation can be found for you, should you desire to return to the world.

"SISTER SERAPHINE."

I seized at once upon this blessed hand of help held out to me, and, paying my bill at the hotel, I went at once to the convent. I was cordially received by all the Sisters, who

numbered seventy-five, and kindly welcomed to my new home. A little cell was assigned me, which was to be mine as long as I remained in the convent. As soon as I was settled in the performance of the simple duties given me to perform, I wrote, as I had promised, to Mrs. May, striving to write in English, for I knew she could not well understand French. In a few days I received a reply, full of expressions of affection and esteem, and assurances of continued friendship. She repeated her offers of assistance, and begged me to write often to her, and tell her all my plans and prospects. She concluded her letter with affectionate remembrances to my little Fifi, and an urgent entreaty for a speedy answer.

This kind letter touched my heart closely, and I breathed a prayer to heaven for blessings to fall upon her who had befriended the poor and friendless. I determined not to write to her until I had fully decided whether I should remain in the convent or renew my battle for life with the cold, pitiless world.

Father Garasche came to see me, and gave me pure, sweet counsel. He told me that I should reflect long and deeply before taking such a step as I contemplated; that I should recollect that my little daughter would rapidly advance in years, and would wish, at no very distant day, to leave the convent, and that I had a natural, heaven-imposed obligation to discharge; that, as a mother, my first duty was to my child, and to shield her from all dangers which I, by God's help, could avert. He also added, that the vow which I thought of taking would part me from her forever; that she would no longer have any claims upon me, and I would be forced to regard her as a stranger.

This view of the subject startled me, and I determined to devote two weeks to prayer and contemplation, hoping to receive aid and direction from on high.

Those two weeks will never be forgotten. I suffered much in the contest between heart and mind. My affection for my child was the only barrier to my fulfilling my desire, and to

overcome that weakness, if such it could be called, was my constant endeavor; but victory did not crown my efforts. Sad and gloomy were my thoughts, and, to add to my misery, a new and unexpected trouble arose, which caused me much suffering. Some cowardly hand had sent an anonymous letter to the Mother Superior, of which I was the subject, and her affectionate manner toward me changed to coolness and severity, and all the Sisters, hitherto so kind and sympathetic, treated me with reserve and indifference. I knew not the contents of the letter, so I could not refute the charges made against me, and was obliged to suffer in silence. Who could have written that letter? I asked myself, alas! in vain. What new enemy could have arisen to blight my last hope, and crush the last fond expectation of my life? Did I deserve all this? Why should I be forsaken and deserted by all, and misery and poverty my only companions? My cup of sorrow was overflowing, and each moment another drop was added.

Father Garasche again called, and never was a visit more warmly welcomed; for my heart yearned for the presence of some kind friend, to whom I could disclose my unhappiness, and from whom I could receive advice and counsel. No longer could I listen to the promptings of my own heart, or listen to the dictates of my own judgment. I had seen every hope of my life wrecked on the shoals of false delusion, and I knew not what to do. Father Garasche asked me if I had given the important subject of our previous discussion full reflection?

I answered in the affirmative, and told him that I had decided that I had no right to evade the most imperative duty of my life; that God had made me a mother, and I must endeavor to fulfil my charge, and watch over my child as long as life lasted. Father Garasche approved my decision, and parted from me, expressing many kind wishes for my future happiness.

I was forced to remain nearly all the winter in the convent. The sisters, with two or three exceptions, treated me with coldness and indifference. The Mother Superior evidently

regarded me with suspicion, and treated me with marked neglect; and, of course, her example was followed by all the others. There were two of the Sisters, however, who believed my story, and whose kind, loving hearts would not permit them to add to the burden of my already over-laden heart. I was very unhappy in this convent.

Toward the close of the winter, a lady called to see me. She was the principal of a large institution of learning—a young ladies' seminary—and desired to engage my services as teacher of the French language. Sister Seraphine refused to recommend me, saying I must make my way myself; but, thank God, I had my letters of recommendation from the schools in New Orleans, where I had been employed for so long a time, and they proved highly satisfactory to Mrs. C., and she engaged me at once. I was delighted to leave the convent, and was determined to be pleased with my new home; and truly, as far as outward surroundings were concerned, it was truly delightful. It was situated in one of the most desirable parts of the city. The house was spacious and elegant, and surrounded by a beautiful yard, where many flowers bloomed in the season of blossoms, and tall trees cast their shadows over them.

I had the entire charge of about forty young ladies, whom I was required to *chaperone* in their evening walks, and look after them generally.

The Principal, Mrs. C., was a lady of sterling worth and integrity, between whose history and my own there were many points of similarity, but there was little or no congeniality between ourselves.

I had no opportunity for enjoying solitude, for I had not the privilege even of having a room all to myself; and sometimes I almost longed for my cell in the convent; but I looked forward to the time when I could have my child with me, and then I should be happy. But a few months had passed away, however, before I discovered that my present home could not be a permanent one. I tried very hard to please Mrs. C., and was willing to perform any amount of extra labor, in order to

retain her favor, but she exacted of me that which was impossible, and so I resigned my situation. The circumstances were these: Mrs. C. had a daughter, about twelve years of age, whom she, with the natural pride and ambition of a mother, desired to be first in all her classes, and to excel in all her studies. The daughter, not imbued with the same spirit as her mother, daily failed to reach the standard of her class, and, consequently, each month her report was a poor one, and the mother's pride was wounded on account of the deficiency of her child. Mrs. C. accredited to me the power—which I did not possess—of improving and fully developing a mind susceptible of only a certain amount of cultivation. I regretted her stupidity, and made every effort for her advancement, but in vain. I could not place her above her classmates, and confer honor upon her which she did not merit; and I preferred to sacrifice my position in the school rather than render injustice to my other pupils. Mrs. C.'s displeasure increased, and she so far forgot herself, one day, as to utter words to me which I will not repeat, but which were wholly unbecoming to one in her position, intrusted as she was with the formation of young, impressible minds. I availed myself of the opportunity thus given, and resigned my situation. I did not wish to return to the Visitation Convent, and so I sought a temporary home in St. Joseph's Convent, where I was kindly received by all the Sisters.

The day after leaving Mrs. C.'s, I went out to the convent to see my little Ffine. After entering, I proceeded at once to the school-room, but received the information that she was in the infirmary. I hastened thither, a thousand vague fears filling my mind, causing my heart to suspend its beatings, and my hand to tremble, so that I could hardly open the door. My child was, indeed, very ill. My heart rebelled against the indifference to the commonest feelings of humanity, which had not caused me to be informed of my child's danger. It is true that every attention was bestowed upon her, but to the aching brow and fevered cheek of a child there is no touch like that of a mother's hand; there is magic in it, and soothing charms

in the very tone of her voice, which will quiet the restless mind, and bring sweet refreshing sleep to the eyes, when all other means have failed. The physician in attendance pronounced my darling to be in a very critical condition. He shook his head gravely as he bent over her, and said, in answer to my eager inquiries: "She is very ill, Madame, and I can give you but little hope. She may live; but if she does, it will not be my skill as a physician, but the work of Him who performs great wonders every day."

The regulations of the house would not admit of my remaining all night; but I implored, with tears and sobs, to be permitted to stay by my child, but was coldly refused, on the plea that there was "no room."

No room? there were two vacant beds in the room, but I did not desire a bed. I only wished to sit by my darling, and watch her uneasy slumbers. The poor, pitiful pretext angered me, and I exclaimed: "If I had gold to offer you, my request would be granted at once, and every comfort would be given to me; but I am poor, and therefore I am denied the privilege of waiting upon my child through the night; and if she should die in the darkness, I would not be by her side to receive her last kiss. Oh, I should hate you, if my child died and I were not with her! She is my all; and you are cold and cruel as the grave, to which I fear she is going if you refuse to let me remain with her. Oh, will nothing touch your heart? Think of the long hours of the night, and the agony and suspense I shall endure before I can see her again. Oh, I implore you, for charity's sake, for sweet pity's sake, to let me stay with her; I will give you no trouble." But in vain were my entreaties. I was forced to go forth and seek my lonely room, there to spend the long hours in alternate weeping and praying.

I knew that my child had been neglected in every way, and her illness was the result of the taking off of her thick clothing, and substituting thinner, when the weather was too cold to admit of the change. I reproached myself bitterly, in a thousand ways, for leaving her in the charge of others, or for thinking that those who regarded her merely as a poor little

charity-scholar would study her health and comfort as a fond mother would do. Oh, I had much to censure myself for; and I resolved, if she were only spared to me, that my future course would be very different.

As soon as the first faint beams of day brightened the eastern sky, I presented myself at the convent gates for admittance. My child was no better. All day I watched by her side; but, at night, I was compelled again to leave her. It is useless to weary the reader with the details of these dreary days, and still more wretched nights, when, filled with terrible fears, which frightened sleep, I paced my lonely room, and longed impatiently for morning. Suffice it to say, that she soon began to get better, and was pronounced out of danger by the kind physician; and with renewed hope animating my heart, I again sought occupation.

I received a note from Mrs. Dr. P——e, one of the wealthiest and most talented ladies of St. Louis, desiring me to call upon her, as she was desirous of obtaining a French teacher for her children. I lost no time in doing so, and was at once engaged by her, at a salary of forty-four dollars a month, to instruct her four children. She also introduced me to many other families, who gave me employment; and I soon had a large class, and was in the receipt of a monthly income that seemed to me like inexhaustible wealth. I engaged board at the house of Mrs. Watts, on Fifth Street; and never shall I forget the day when I went to the convent, and brought from thence my little daughter, still feeble, but convalescent beyond doubt. The whole wealth of the mines of Golconda could not have purchased the pleasure of that hour; and since then we have never been separated.

I was supremely happy. Fortune, at last, had smiled upon me, and I was the recipient of her bounty to an (to me) unheard-of degree. My good luck was all owing, however, to Mrs. P——e, who proved herself to be a kind, true friend. As I write, my heart fills with gratitude toward this noble, good lady, this "perfect woman nobly planned;" and I feel as though it would be the crowning joy of my life, could I in

some way make her sensible of my gratitude toward her, or discharge a small portion of the debt of obligation which I owe her.

I sent Ffine to the Convent of the Sacred Heart, as a day-scholar, and was myself employed, from morning until night, in teaching; and, for the first time in many months, my heart was at rest.

## CHAPTER LIX.

### MY DEPARTURE FOR YAZOO CITY.

SIXTEEN months glided peacefully and quietly away; and during this time I saved several hundred dollars. I practised the strictest economy, and even deprived myself of many necessaries in the way of clothing. I had an object to accomplish, and now that a way was opened which promised to aid me in the fulfilment of my plans, I could but throw myself heart and soul into the accomplishment of my purpose. I desired to go to Yazoo City, that place where I had suffered so much, where so much charity had been bestowed upon me, so many cruel blows dealt out to me. I longed, with the unutterable longing of a heart bereft of all hope, to look once more upon the face of him, who alone had drawn the fullness of my heart from its secret chambers, who had rifled its sweetness, and left it forsaken and forlorn as the bee leaves the flower from which he has extracted the sweetness of its life. I thought, too, of my child; and although I desired nothing of Dr. Hilton for myself, still I deemed it my duty to make an effort for her sake, and secure from him some portion of the worldly goods with which he had been so munificently endowed, for the support and education of his little forsaken daughter. As I thought of this, there passed before me in quick succession the many days of agony, and nights of sleepless wretchedness, my wounded feelings and blighted

hopes, and, for a while, the beautiful love which I had cherished as the purest, divinest emotion of my soul, was covered as if with a funereal pall, and anger and revenge usurped its place, and watched beside its resting-place. Revenge!—revenge! The word sounded sweetly in my ear; but my good angel, who had fallen back affrighted, came timidly back to her resting-place, and resumed her gentle sway; and under her sweet influence I grew calm and mild.

I determined to write to Dr. Hilton that I was coming to Yazoo City, and for what purpose. I did not expect an answer to my letter, but I knew that it would reach him, and that was all that I desired. Eight years had now elapsed since I first went to Yazoo, a poor young thing—a child alike in years and in hopes—unsuspicious of the misery that the future held in store for me,—a target for the arrows of a relentless fate, which, sent with an unerring hand, had struck to the very core my yielding, bleeding heart.

About this time, many of my friends and pupils, among whom was my dear Mrs. P——e and her family, went to Paris, it being the time of the Great Exposition, and I was left comparatively free to follow my own inclinations. While holding my decision still in abeyance, I had the following dream, which I will relate. As my readers have already discovered, I was easily impressed by dreams, and many warnings and intuitions had been conveyed to me through their instrumentality.

I dreamed that I was standing upon the borders of a beautiful wood, from which floated forth the palpable odors of many flowers, while the wild roses and sweet-briers guarded the entrance to its long, green alleys, and smooth, brown paths. I gazed into its far, dim recesses, with a strong desire to penetrate them, and discover the mystery which I was sure they were hiding; for its subtle influence was hanging over me, filling me with superstitious dread. The day was bright and lovely, and everything seemed to remind me of those far-away days when my own heart throbbed in quick response to the glory of the sunlight, the music of the birds, and the fragrance

of the flowers. The sky was as blue as the skies of my own sunny France, and an invisible *something*, floating through the air, touched my brow with its thin fingers, and whispered, "Forget all, but that you were happy once."

Suddenly I saw a horseman approaching me from the wood, with some difficulty forcing his way through the narrow path overshadowed by low, thick branches. I strove to conceal myself; but in the bewilderment known only in dreams, I could not find a hiding-place, and he approached me, and dismounted. I recognized him as Colonel Hilton, and exclaimed in terror, "Oh, mine enemy has found me out!" and was about to flee into the wood for safety, when coming nearer, he seized my hand, and implored me to forgive him. In amazement at the gentleness which I had never known him to wear before, I said: "I do forgive you freely and fully, as truly as I hope to be saved."

"Then take back your curse," he cried. "It weighs me down, and I cannot rest;" and as I repeated my words of forgiveness, he sprang upon his horse and rode away.

I wakened, a cold sweat bathing my brow, and my whole frame agitated with a nervous tremor. Instinctively I felt that Colonel Hilton was dead, although I had never heard of his decease; and I recalled, with regret my last interview with him, when in my agony and despair I had cursed him from the fullness of a heart overburdened with wretchedness, and told him, that, should he die before I did, his body should not rest among Christians; that, hyena-like, I would pursue him beyond the grave; that even in its silent sanctuary his bones should not rest in peace.

The day following the night of my dream I received the following letter from Dr. Hilton, in answer to the many I had written him:

"YAZOO CITY, Miss., Sept., 18—.

"MADAME:—During the past year I have received several letters from you, sent to me, with what purpose you best know. It is useless for you to utter threats of revenge, for I know they are impotent. All that you have suffered, you brought upon yourself. You say your brother is coming to America

to avenge your wrongs. Let him come. I shall know how to defend myself. You also say that you are about to come to Yazoo City. Let me tell you, you will lose both your money and your time by doing so, for I am entirely broken up by the war, and cannot make a living for myself and family, and certainly can do nothing for you. I expect to do something for your child if ever I am able; but you can have very little hope for the future from me. J. R. HILTON."

This letter did not deter me from following out my plan, and I made arrangements for leaving St. Louis at once, for Yazoo City. I was the only lady upon the boat, and but for the companionship of Fifine, should have been very lonely. The trip was long and tedious. I had left the cholera behind me in St. Louis, and the yellow fever was before me, raging in the Southern cities. I was obliged to remain at Vicksburg over one night, waiting for a boat; and while there, my little Fifine wrote a sweet little letter to her father, to apprise him of our coming. I took a strange delight in constantly reminding Dr. Hilton of our existence, for I well knew that every proof which he received of it, in the shape of letters from my own hand, or from his poor, forsaken child, was like a keen dagger piercing him to the heart. We made the trip from Vicksburg to Yazoo in a few hours. Upon reaching the latter place, I went at once to the hotel, which was kept by a Mr. Cusack, who, upon learning that I was from Vicksburg, hesitated as to the wisdom of receiving me; for he was apprehensive that the terrible fever, then doing its work of death at that place, might have travelled with me. He was a delicate and very nervous man, and easily frightened. I will state here, *en passant*, that his fears seemed almost prophetic, for he died three days afterward of the dreaded disease.

The morning after my arrival, while I was at the breakfast-table, I was informed that a gentleman desired to see me. I jumped at once to the conclusion that it was Dr. Hilton, and with my mind full of vague emotions, I hastened to the parlor; but instead of the face I expected and longed to see, my eyes fell upon that of a perfect stranger, who met me with a



polite bow, and introduced himself as Judge Bowen. He at once commenced the conversation by saying:

"Madame, Dr. Hilton has expected you here daily, and has empowered me to meet you, and endeavor to make some arrangements with you. He is willing to divide all that he has with you, if you will leave Yazoo City immediately."

I replied, with all the dignity I could assume, "I would like to have an interview with Dr. Hilton. I have that to say to him which I cannot well intrust to a third person."

"Very well, Madame, I will tell him of your desire; but I will tell you candidly, I do not think he will accede to it. In the meantime, do you need money?—will fifty dollars answer for your present wants?"

I knew by Judge Bowen's tone and manner, that Dr. Hilton was full of remorse, and disposed to treat me kindly. I thanked him, therefore, and told him that I would be glad to receive assistance from Dr. Hilton, although I was not in immediate need of money.

I determined to leave the hotel for a boarding-place, where I could be more quiet and retired. I called for my bill, and to my surprise was informed that it was eight dollars. I had remained there but one night, and had had but one meal—my breakfast. I expostulated with the landlord, but he would not abate one jot of his extortionate demand, so I paid it, saying:

"You have taken a large share of my poor means, Mr. Cusack, but it will not bring you any blessing. If one dollar of this money, which you take from me because I am friendless and unprotected, ever brings relief and good to any one, it will not be you;" and I left him. As I have before stated, this gentleman died three days afterward; so my words seemed almost like a prophecy.

I found a boarding-place at a very pleasant house, with a lady whom I remembered as having met when I was in Yazoo the first time. Eight years had passed since then—years of sorrow and suffering to me—and although change had passed over all things, it had brought to me neither peace nor hap-

piness. The yard about my new home was filled with rare shrubs and ornamental trees, which shaded beautiful flower-beds of fantastic shapes and different sizes. I had a very pleasant room, and considered myself very fortunate in securing such a delightful home. My landlady knew all my story, and was very kind to me. Many friends came to see me, whom I had known on my former visit, and from many of whom I had received charity.

In a few days, I received another visit from Judge Bowen. He informed me that Dr. Hilton refused to see me, but would do as he had agreed—would furnish me with money, and would pay my passage on the boat, wherever I desired to go, provided I would leave the State of Mississippi at once. My anger was aroused, and I replied:

"Judge Bowen, I will not receive any money from Dr. Hilton on that condition. I have a right to demand it from him for the support of his child, but I have provided for her and for myself for eight long years, and can do so for eight more, if it be necessary. I have wronged no one; money is no object to me, and I shall remain in Yazoo City as long as I feel disposed to do so."

The Judge then produced a letter, which seemed to be a very lengthy one, and saying that it was from Dr. Hilton, commenced to read it to me, but I refused to listen to it.

Judge Bowen was very polite, and begged me to excuse him, but said he must perform his duty as Dr. Hilton's lawyer.

I remained in Yazoo City but one week longer, and then started to return to St. Louis; but on reaching Vicksburg, I concluded to remain there a while, and endeavor to obtain scholars in French and music. I applied for a situation to Professor Foster, the principal of a large school, showing the letters of recommendation which I had brought from St. Louis. I soon raised a small class, and was busily employed during all the hours of the day; but the remuneration which I received for my services was poor and scanty, and barely paid my board; and I saw that it was best for me to leave the city,



and seek some other home. I was restless and unhappy; and, actuated by a spirit of jealousy and revenge, I decided to return to Yazoo City, and make it my permanent residence, supporting myself by teaching or sewing. My child should be familiar with her father's face at least, if she did not know the sound of his voice. It should be my revenge upon him that he should never forget the humiliation of my position—that he should have ever near him the spectacle of his innocent child growing to womanhood unowned, and unprotected by her cruel father—that the face of his first-born should come between him and the little ones now clustered around his hearth, and drive repose and happiness from his heart.

## CHAPTER LX.

### THE BOAT SINKS, BUT I ARRIVE IN YAZOO CITY.

I TOOK passage on the little steamer "Hope" for Yazoo City. I felt uneasy and full of foreboding, and after the boat had fairly left the wharf, and was steaming on her way down the river, I would have given worlds, had they been mine to bestow, if I could only have retraced the step I had taken. A strange presentiment filled my heart, and after I had retired, it was long before sleep visited my pillow. I clasped my precious child close in my arms, and about midnight I fell into an uneasy slumber, from which I was roused, in an hour's time, by a terrible crashing and jarring of the boat. A great confusion immediately ensued. A new life seemed to have awakened in an instant, where but a moment before silence and slumber reigned, and cries of "the boat is sinking!" resounded through the air. I sprang out into the ladies' cabin, with my child pressed close to my breast, and rushed frantically down to the forward part of the boat, which was sinking fast. Terror and confusion reigned; but, to be

brief, the passengers were all saved, although most of them were obliged to go on shore in the scanty clothing in which they were arrayed at the time of the accident. I had on my *robe de nuit*, as did my child also. Our trunks were, however, afterward recovered. The shore, at the place of our landing, was bare and deserted, and we were all obliged to seek shelter at the nearest houses, which were, none of them, less than half a mile from the scene of our disaster.

I went to the house of a Mrs. Brooks, who was very kind, and received me with the greatest willingness, and furnished clothing for the present protection of myself and child.

Strange as it may seem, this lady was, like myself, a deserted wife, and hence her ready sympathy for me, and her quick appreciation of my peculiar trials. In this lady I found a true friend, and I shall never forget her kindness to me. I was very ill after my exposure to the night air at the time of the accident, and I remained at Mrs. Brooks's for two months, before I was able to proceed on my journey, during which time I received every care and attention from my hostess and her two daughters. At the expiration of this time, I proceeded to Yazoo City. The hotel had again changed hands, and was now kept by a gentleman of the name of Buersham, who was a good, noble-hearted man. I remained at the hotel a week, and then took lodgings with a Mrs. Prince. To my astonishment, my bill was just the same as had before been charged for a night's lodging and breakfast, and I realized how my good landlord, understanding and pitying my necessities, had endeavored to suit his bill to the length of my slender purse.

My new abode was in a small but pleasant house in a quiet and secluded place. Here I passed many months, supporting myself and child by teaching, for I soon had a large class. I saw nothing of Dr. Hilton, but heard frequently of him; for he was often the topic of conversation between me and my friends, who knew that everything concerning him was of the deepest interest to me. I learned that his wife was in very delicate health, and was supposed to have the consumption.

He was quite dissipated, had lost all his property during the war, and possessed neither credit nor reputation. Oh, it distressed me beyond measure to know that he, whom I had once regarded as my *beau ideal* of manly perfection, had fallen so low. About this time, I learned that he had called at Mrs. Miller's, where I had boarded on my previous visit to Yazoo, and asked for me in these terms:

"Is there a lady boarding here, who styles herself Mrs. Hilton?"

My anger was deep and bitter. How dared he speak of me in these terms? Was he about to recommence his humiliating work of tarnishing my reputation, and endeavoring to deprive me of the bare means of subsistence by taking away my good name? Ah! I could defend myself now. I could speak his language, brokenly it is true, but still all could understand me without difficulty; and I could plead my own cause. I would not remain quiet, and allow him to circulate vile slanders concerning me, or to speak of the mother of his child in such disgraceful terms. I therefore wrote him a letter, which was not the weak wail of a heart-broken woman, such as he had hitherto received from me, but the indignant outpouring of the scorn of outraged dignity. In it I threatened to see his wife face to face, and tell her all. I declared that I would visit the wrongs of my child upon her children, and that my vengeance would fall upon them when least expected.

After dispatching this letter to Dr. Hilton, I determined to write to his wife also; for I knew that such an act on my part would cut him to the heart. I therefore wrote to her the following letter:

"MADAME:—I am here in Yazoo City, with the determination of seeing you face to face. You may think that I am not worthy, but the great God, who reads all hearts, will judge between us. I am not the person who has been described to you, Madame, but a lady, possessed of as refined feelings as yourself—as susceptible of joy, and as ready to sink in anguish at the approach of sorrow. Before the great God, Dr. Hilton is not your husband, but mine; and your children have no

right to bear his name. Why is not my child permitted to look upon the face of her father? Because you, Madame, are in her mother's place in his house, and your children usurp her own place by his side. You won him from me, but you have not made him happy. But I do not wish to reproach you, Madame; for you did not know the sorrow and wrong you was inflicting upon one who never wronged you or yours.

"I will see you, Madame, when you least expect it. From my own lips you shall hear the recital of my wrongs, and unconsciously to yourself, you shall avenge them.

"Madame, I have an object in view. For eight long years I have been homeless and desolate, oftentimes starving! but, despite all that I have suffered, my heart has never swerved from its allegiance toward him, who vowed before God's holy altar to love and cherish me; and, after wandering through many places, I have been impelled to come here, for I believe that the time has come when retribution is about to fall upon the one who has wronged me so deeply. 'The mills of God grind slowly;' but the hour will come at last when we, who stand and wait, shall see that 'with exactness grind they all.'

"Farewell, Madame! The thought of me and my helpless little child must ever be a shadow upon your heart. Again I say, when you least expect it I will be by your side; and if I die before you, my spirit shall sit at your hearth, and ever interpose its shadowy hands between you and the man you call your husband.

LAURE C. HILTON."

I sent my letter; but I never fulfilled my threat. Before I could seek her, her soul had gone to another country, and stood face to face with her God, to be rewarded according to her merits.

## CHAPTER LXI.

### CONCLUSION.

READER, my sad story is drawing to a close. In the fields of romance the skilful hand of the novelist reaps only blooming flowers, and joy and happiness spring up where tears

and sorrows were sown ; but on the plains of destiny, where cold reality is the harvester, misery and despair are more often garnered at the harvest-time, than love and hope. The "ready pen" of the novelist does the work of a magician ; clouds and falling rains are transmuted to sunlight, and fallow fields bloom and rejoice as if Dionysius had passed over them. Vice is rewarded, or at least goes unpunished, while virtue starves and is laid away in lonely graves, forgotten and unknown. But in real life the laws of compensation and retribution work out their own fulfilment, according to the prophecies of old. Right and truth will conquer at last ; and if we only wait God's own time, we shall see that He is the avenger, and woes and desolation follow those who transgress His laws.

When I first went to Yazoo City, full of hope and eager expectation, dreaming of no other reception from my husband than that which my heart desired, Dr. Hilton was prosperous and happy.

The plantation of his father was one of the largest in that section of the country ; and Colonel Hilton himself possessed the prestige and popularity which an old and wealthy resident always gains, particularly in the South ; but he was by nature avaricious and tyrannical, and those immediately connected with him suffered much in consequence of his fierce and cruel temper. Dr. Hilton was a worthy scion of the parent stock. Naturally weak and undisciplined, he preferred to yield to circumstances, whether they forced him in the right or wrong direction ; and when his father, possessed by the insatiate demons of ambition and avarice, commanded him to "think no more of the young girl whom he had been weak enough to marry, in order that he might wed with one who would bring him a fortune," he was not strong enough, morally, to resist. That he loved me wholly and truly, in the first sweet days of our wedded life, I have never for one moment doubted ; but to one of his peculiar temperament, "love must either rise or fall — it cannot stand still," and consequently it could not stand the test of absence or opposition ; and after he left me, whatever his intentions might have been at the time, yet,

knowing that his father was furious at his marriage, and that his only hope of being restored to favor was by undoing the deed as far as possible, he grew to look upon me as an incumbrance, and to wish me out of the way.

My persistency in seeking him, also probably irritated and annoyed him, and rendered matters worse. Had I been a woman of discernment and judgment, with any knowledge of the world, possessed of any *savoir vivre*, or pride, or dignity of character, I should have spurned the thought of obtruding myself so constantly before him, and should most probably have returned to France, and ended my days there peacefully and tranquilly, among my beloved friends and relatives.

But I was a child in years, although possessed of a woman's strength of endurance and affection. My husband was my idol ; and I clung to the hope of regaining his love as a drowning man clings to a straw ; where that love was concerned, all other feelings were swept away, or sunk before it, crushed and subdued ; pride was broken, ambition blighted, dignity surrendered. The idea of his baseness being voluntary, I utterly repudiated ; I could not be so disloyal to my love as to believe such treason ; and to the last I regarded him as a victim to filial duty, coerced by a cruel father, and compelled to enact the *role* of a villain. Through all the weary years which had passed since that unhappy time, when I had sought the shelter of my husband's arms as a timid bird seeks the shelter of the parent nest, I and my innocent child had been the victims of outrage and wrong ; we had suffered, while he who persecuted us had been prosperous and powerful. But now the hour had come when the sun of prosperity no longer shone upon him, and the star of success, that had hung sparkling before him, set in the darkest night, never to rise again. Impelled by the restless spirit which animated my breast, and which would not be quieted, I had been drawn to Yazoo City without special aim or object, there to wait, as events proved, until I had been fully avenged — until the heart of him who had so relentlessly blighted my life, was left as bare and desolate as he had rendered mine.

I will briefly chronicle the events which occurred during the few short months of my stay in Yazoo City, without entering into the details of my own life during this period. Suffice it to say, that I lived quietly and retired, earning a modest subsistence by teaching.

The letter which I in my anger wrote to Mrs. Hilton, struck her to the heart like an arrow shot from the bow of a skilful marksman, and performed a work which I had not foreseen. As I have before stated, she was very delicate, being already a helpless victim in the fell grasp of consumption, that dread destroyer of youth and beauty. She had not been made aware of my near proximity, the first intimation which she received of it being my letter, which she read in the solitude of her own chamber. Shortly after it was given to her, a servant entered the room with some trifling message, and found her lying insensible upon the floor, with my letter clasped tightly in her hand. She was borne to her bed, from which she never rose again; for in a few days her spirit passed away from its frail tenement of clay, to that other realm where "care and sorrow are unknown." On her death-bed, she exhorted her husband to repentance, urging him to make what reparation he could to those he had injured, and at least to place his first-born child beyond the reach of want; and with the words of forgiveness upon her lips, and a prayer for mercy upon him, she passed away.

I was terribly shocked upon hearing of her death, for I feared that I had hastened it; and I reproached myself bitterly for my hasty act.

She left three children, who were said to be very lovely and interesting; but in a short time death came among them, through the gates left ajar by the passing of the mother's spirit, and two of the little ones followed her to the skies.

But one, a little girl, remained to cheer her father's heart; but the blight was upon her, and she too, innocent as she was, must assist in working out the punishment of her parent. She met with a frightful accident, by the falling of a bale of cotton; and although her life was spared, she was rendered

a helpless cripple for life. Thus, with maimed and distorted limbs, not knowing a mother's love and care, uncheered by the sweet companionship of her early playmates, her days drag out their weary lengths, as void of sunshine as were the early days of my forsaken little one.

Again death came to the doomed household. Dr. Hilton had a very sweet sister, Mrs. Woodward, who had always spoken of me with pity, and regarded me with sympathy and kindness, as "one more sinned against than sinning." She was his favorite sister, his "*petite* Carrie," as he called her, and he loved her with all the devotion of a brother's love. She had been reared in luxury, every expense had been lavished upon her education; but, young and romantic, she had eloped with and married a man without position or fortune, about three years previous to the time of which I am writing. This was a bitter blow to her proud family, but they had received her again into favor, and she had been living with her brother during his days of trouble and affliction. But as if a blight fell upon all whom he loved, she too died under the most distressing circumstances, leaving two tender infants to the mercies of the cold world, one a little wee thing of only two days old. And so poor were they at the time of her death, that the elegant and costly piano, which had been imported from Europe for her in former days, was sold, in order to furnish her with the comforts which her illness demanded, and, after her death, to provide a coffin in which to enclose her poor remains.

It seemed as though Dr. Hilton had drained the cup of sorrow to the very dregs—but the hand of misfortune stayed not yet. Death lurked in the air about his home, and even the dumb beasts succumbed to his icy touch. A murrain fell upon the cattle, and all the animals about the place became infected with it, and died.

Oh, what a terrible change passed over the beautiful home which had seemed a very haven of peace and rest—a harbor of refuge to me, on that well-remembered day when I had been so cruelly driven away by Col. Hilton, and, with my help-

less little babe in my arms, subjected to outrage and indignity at the hands of the vile negro, who but fulfilled his master's orders in thus maltreating me. Quiet and desolation brooded over the deserted grounds; tall, rank weeds flaunted their shameless heads where formerly a gay *parterre*, filled with the choicest and rarest flowers, burdened the air with delicious fragrance. The branches of the trees, ragged and untrimmed, waved mournfully to and fro, and everything wore a sad and deserted look, painful to behold, to one who remembered the days of the prosperity of the family. And Col. Hilton, the aider and abetter, if not the author of all my wretchedness, where was he? Ah! he too had gone the way of all the living, and, strange to relate, the place of his burial was unknown. He had died during the war, at a time when that section of the country was the scene of constant disturbance. The grave-yards were not places of safety even for the harmless bodies of the dead; for many new-made graves were rifled by the soldiery in the search for buried treasure, and the exhumed bodies remained uncovered and exposed. Col. Hilton's death occurred during the time of the greatest troubles, when even burials had to be conducted with secrecy and dispatch; and, consequently, none but negroes, who had long since left the place, knew the last resting-place of the once proud Col. Hilton.

At the present time of writing, Dr. Hilton is still alive, a lonely and miserable man. Prematurely aged, and with the baleful effects of dissipation making sad inroads upon his once fine constitution, he no more resembles, in personal appearance, the man to whom I gave the first and only love of my life, than Vulcan resembled Apollo. His sin has wrought its own punishment, and he is, to-day, as poor and friendless as I was when he sought to drive me to very desperation, that I might rush on to the fate of the suicide, and leave him free and untrammelled. He had wealth, but it has flown from him; he had a wife and lovely children, but they look down on him from the skies; and his desolate and loveless life, wrecked by his own act, is void of treasure, and bare of

sunshine; while he seeks to drown the hideous spectres of remorse and regret in the bewildering depths of the sparkling bowl, which "biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." As for me, I am "living my own life." Shortly after the events I have narrated, I left Yazoo City, and returned to St. Louis. This city I have made my home; and here, pursuing my humble calling, I manage to support myself and my child, without the aid of charity, in a modest and frugal way. Fifine, now a bright-eyed, thoughtful child of eleven years, wearing upon her brow the impress of the shadow of her mother's sorrow, is in the convent at school. My days go by peacefully and calmly. I have many kind and dear friends around me, but my hopes for the future are centred in my child. The "endless toil and endeavor" of life is, for her sake, a sweet labor; and in her love and devotion I find my compensation for all I have suffered. Still, I am very lonely at times, and feel that I am desolate and forsaken. There is a hunger in my heart forever unsatisfied, and which will remain unsatisfied to the day of my death—lightened and made beautiful only by the pure glow of my child's affection.

"Life is to me a vigil which none share—  
My love a sacrifice—my hopes a prayer."

FINIS.