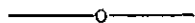


POPULAR TALES,

BY THE AUTHOR OF THIS VOLUME.



- I.—MARIAN GREY.
- II.—LENA RIVERS.
- III.—MEADOW BROOK.
- IV.—HOMESTEAD ON THE HILLSIDE.
- V.—DORA DEANE.
- VI.—COUSIN MAUDE.



PRICE \$1 25 EACH.

COUSIN MAUDE

AND

ROSAMOND,

BY

MRS. MARY J. HOLMES,

AUTHOR OF "LENA RIVERS," "HOMESTEAD ON THE HILL SIDE," "MEADOW BROOK,"
"DORA DEANE," "MAGGIE MILLER," ETC.



NEW YORK:

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TO

MORRIS W. SMITH

OF NEW ORLEANS,

These Stories,

OF LIFE AMONG THE NORTHERN HILLS

ARE RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY HIS FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1860, by

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COUSIN MAUDE;

OR,

THE MILKMAN'S HEIRESS.

CHAPTER I.

DR. KENNEDY.

"If you please, marm, the man from York State is comin' afoot. Too stingy to ride, I'll warrant," and Janet, the housekeeper, disappeared from the parlor, just as the sound of the gate was heard, and an unusually fine-looking middle-aged man was seen coming up the box-lined walk which led to the cottage door.

The person thus addressed was a lady, whose face, though young and handsome, wore a look which told of early sorrow. Matilda Remington had been a happy, loving wife, but the old church-yard in Vernon contained a grass-grown grave, where rested the noble heart which had won her girlish love. And she was a widow now, a fair-haired, blue-eyed widow, and the stranger who had so excited Janet's wrath by walking from the depot, a distance of three miles, would claim her as his bride ere the morrow's sun was midway in the heavens. How the

engagement happened she could not exactly tell, but happened it had, and she was pledged to leave the vine-wreathed cottage which Harry had built for her, and go with one of whom she knew comparatively little.

Six months before our story opens, she had spent a few days with him at the house of a mutual friend in an adjoining state, and since that time they had written to each other regularly, the correspondence resulting at last in an engagement, which he had now come to fulfil. He had never visited her before in her own home, consequently she was wholly unacquainted with his disposition or peculiarities. He was intelligent and refined, commanding in appearance, and agreeable in manner, whenever he chose to be, and when he wrote to her of his home, which he said would be a second Paradise were *she* its mistress, when he spoke of the little curly-headed girl who so much needed a mother's care, and when, more than all, he hinted that his was no beggar's fortune, she yielded; for Matilda Remington did not dislike the luxuries which money alone can purchase. Her own fortune was small, and as there was now no hand save her own to provide, she often found it necessary to economize more than she wished to do. But Dr. Kennedy was *rich*, and if she married him she would escape a multitude of annoyances, so she made herself believe that she loved him; and when she heard, as she more than once had heard, rumors of a sad, white-faced woman, to whom the grave was a welcome rest, she said the story was false, and, shaking her pretty head, refused to believe that there was aught in the doctor of evil.

"To be sure, he was not at all like Harry—she could never find one who was—but he was so tall, so dignified, so grand, so particular, that it seemed almost like *stooping*,

for one in his position to think of her, and she liked him all the better for his condescension."

Thus she ever reasoned, and when Janet said that he was coming, and she, too, heard his step upon the piazza, the bright blushes broke over her youthful face, and casting a hurried glance at the mirror, she hastened out to meet him.

"Matty, my dear!" he said, and his thin lips touched her glowing cheek, but in his cold gray eye, there shone no *love*,—no *feeling*,—no *heart*.

He was too supremely selfish to esteem another higher than himself, and though it flattered him to know that the young creature was so glad to meet him, it awoke no answering chord, and he merely thought that with her to minister to him he should possibly be happier than he had been with her predecessor.

"You must be very tired," she said, as she led the way into the cozy parlor. Then, seating him in the easy chair near to the open window, she continued. "How warm you are. What made you walk this sultry afternoon?"

"It is a maxim of mine never to ride when I can walk," said he, "for I don't believe in humoring those omnibus drivers by paying their exorbitant prices."

"Two shillings surely, is not an exorbitant price," trembled on Mrs. Remington's lips, but she was prevented from saying so, by his asking "if every thing were in readiness for the morrow."

"Yes, every thing," she replied. "The cottage is sold, and"—

"Ah, indeed, sold!" said he, interrupting her. "If I mistake not you told me, when I met you in Rome, that it was left by will to you. May I, as your to-morrow's

husband, ask how much you received for it?" and he unbent his dignity so far as to wind his arm around her waist.

But the arm was involuntarily withdrawn, when, with her usual frankness, Matty replied; "I received a thousand dollars, but there were debts to be paid, so that I had only five hundred left, and this I made over to my daughter to be used for her education."

Dr. Kennedy did not say that he was disappointed, and as Matty was not much of a physiognomist, she did not read it in his face, and she continued: "Janet will remain here awhile, to arrange matters, before joining me in my new home. She wished me to leave my little girl to come with her, but I can't do that. I must have my child with me. You've never seen her, have you? I'll call her at once," and stepping to the door she bade Janet bring *Maude* into the parlor.

"*Maude!*" How Dr. Kennedy started at the mention of a name, which drove all thoughts of the five hundred dollars from his mind. There was *feeling—passion—every thing*, now, in his cold gray eye, but quickly recovering his composure, he said calmly: "Maude, Matty—Maude, is that your child's name?"

"Why, yes," she answered, laughingly. "Didn't you know it before?"

"How should I," he replied, "when in your letters you have always called her *daughter*? But has she no other name? She surely was not baptised Maude?"

Ere Mrs. Remington could speak, the sound of little pattering feet was heard in the hall without, and in a moment Maude Remington stood before her father-in-law, erect, looking, as that rather fastidious gentleman thought,

more like a wild gipsy than the child of a civilized mother. She was a fat, chubby creature, scarcely yet five years old; black-eyed, black-haired, and black-faced, too, with short, thick curls, which, damp with perspiration, stood up all over her head, giving her a singular appearance. She had been playing in the brook, her favorite companion, and now, with little spatters of mud ornamenting both face and pantalets, her sun-bonnet hanging down her back, and her hands full of pebble-stones, she stood furtively eying the stranger, whose mental exclamation was: "Mercy, what a fright!"

"Maude!" exclaimed the distressed Mrs. Remington, "where have you been? Go at once to Janet, and have your dress changed; then come back to me."

Nothing loth to join Janet, whose company was preferable to that of the stranger, Maude left the room, while Dr. Kennedy, turning to Mrs. Remington, said: "She is not at all like you, my dear."

"No," answered the lady; "she is like her father in every thing; the same eyes, the same hair, and"—

She was going on to say more, when the expression of Dr. Kennedy's face stopped her, and she began to wonder if she had displeased him. Dr. Kennedy could talk for hours of "the late Mrs. Kennedy," accompanying his words with long-drawn sighs, and enumerating her many virtues, all of which he expected to be improved upon by her successor; but he could not bear to hear the name of Harry Remington spoken by one who was to be his wife, and he at once changed the subject of Maude's looks to her name, which he learned was really *Matilda*. She had been called *Maude*, Matty said, after one who was once a very dear friend both of herself and her husband.

"Then we will call her Matilda," said he, "as it is a maxim of mine never to spoil children by giving them pet-names."

"But you call your daughter *Nellie*," suggested the little widow, and in her soft, blue eye there shone a mischievous twinkle, as if she fancied she had beaten him with his own argument.

But if she thought to convince that most unreasonable man, she was mistaken. What he did was no criterion for others, unless he chose that it should be so, and he answered, "That is sister Kelsey's idea, and as she is very fond of *Nellie*, I do not interfere. But, seriously, *Mattie*, darling"—and he drew her to his side, with an uncommon show of fondness—"I cannot call your daughter *Maude*; I do not like the name, and it is a maxim of mine, that if a person dislikes a name, 'tis an easy matter to dislike the one who bears it."

Had Mrs. Remington cared less for him than she did, she might have wondered how many more disagreeable maxims he had in store. But love is blind, or nearly so; and when, as if to make amends for his remarks, he caressed her with an unusual degree of tenderness, the impulsive woman felt that she would call her daughter any thing which suited him. Accordingly, when at last Maude returned to the parlor, with her dress changed, her curls arranged, and her dimpled cheeks shining with the *suds* in which they had been washed, she was prepared to say *Matilda* or whatever else pleased his capricious fancy.

"Little girl," he said, extending his hand toward her, "little girl, come here. I wish to talk with you."

But the little girl hung back, and when her mother insisted upon her going to the gentleman, asking if she did

not like him, she answered decidedly, "No, I don't like him, and he shan't be my pa, either!"

"Maude, daughter!" exclaimed Mrs. Remington, while Dr. Kennedy, turning slightly pale, thought "wretch!" but said, "Matilda, come here, wont you?"

"I ain't Matilda," she answered. "I wont be Matilda—I'm Maude," and her large black eyes flashed defiantly upon him.

It was in vain that Dr. Kennedy coaxed and Mrs. Remington threatened. Maude had taken a dislike to the stranger, and as he persisted in calling her Matilda, she persisted in refusing to answer, until at last, hearing Janet pass through the hall, she ran out to her, sure of finding comfort and sympathy there.

"I am afraid I have suffered Maude to have her own way too much, and for the future I must be more strict with her," said Mrs. Remington, apologetically; while the Doctor replied, "I think, myself, a little wholesome discipline would not be amiss. 'Tis a maxim of mine, spare the rod and spoil the child; but, of course, I shall not interfere in the matter."

This last he said because he saw a shadow flit over the fair face of the widow, who, like most indulgent mothers, did not wholly believe in Solomon. The sight of Janet in the hall suggested a fresh subject to the doctor's mind, and, after coughing a little, he said, "Did I understand that your domestic was intending to join you at Laurel Hill?"

"Yes;" returned Mrs. Remington, "Janet came to live with my mother when I was a little girl no larger than Maude. Since my marriage she has lived with me, and I would not part with her for any thing."

"But do you not think two kinds of servants are apt to make trouble, particularly if one is black and the other white?" and in the speaker's face there was an expression which puzzled Mrs. Remington, who could scarce refrain from crying at the thoughts of parting with Janet, and who began to have a foretaste of the dreary homesickness which was to wear her life away.

"I *can't* do without Janet," she said, "she knows all my ways, and I trust her with every thing."

"The very reason why she should not go," returned the doctor. "She and old Hannah would quarrel at once. You would take sides with Janet, I with Hannah, and that might produce a feeling which ought never to exist between man and wife. No, my dear, listen to me in this matter, and let Janet remain in Vernon. Old Hannah has been in my family a long time. She was formerly a slave, and belonged to my uncle, who lived in Virginia, and who, at his death, gave her to me. Of course I set her free, for I pride myself on being a man of humanity, and since that time she has lived with us, superintending the household entirely since Mrs. Kennedy's death. She is very peculiar, and would never suffer Janet to dictate, as I am sure, from what you say, she would do. So, my dear, try and think all is for the best. You need not tell her she is not to come, for it is a maxim of mine to avoid all unnecessary scenes, and you can easily write it in a letter."

Poor Mrs. Remington! she knew intuitively that the matter was decided, and was she not to be forgiven, if at that moment she thought of the grass-grown grave, whose occupant had in life been only too happy granting her slightest wish. But Harry was gone, and the man with whom she now had to deal was an exacting, tyrannical

master, to whose will her own must ever be subservient. This, however, she did not then understand. She knew he was not at all like Harry, but she fancied that the difference consisted in his being so much older, graver, and wiser than her husband had been, and so with a sigh, she yielded the point, thinking that Janet would be the greater sufferer of the two.

That evening several of her acquaintance called to see the bridegroom elect, whom, in Mrs. Remington's hearing, they pronounced *very* fine-looking, and quite agreeable in manner; compliments which tended in a measure to soothe her irritated feelings and quiet the rapid beatings of her heart, which for hours after she retired to rest would occasionally whisper to her that the path she was about to tread was far from being strewn with flowers.

"He loves me, I know," she thought, "though his manner of showing it is so different from Harry, but I shall become accustomed to that after a while, and be very, very happy," and comforted with this assurance she fell asleep, encircling within her arms the little Maude, whose name had awakened bitter memories in the heart of him who in an adjoining chamber battled with thoughts of the dark past, which now, on the eve of his second marriage passed in sad review before his mind.

Memories there were of a gentle, pale-faced woman, who, when her blue eyes were dim with coming death, had shudderingly turned away from him, as if his presence brought her more of pain than joy. Memories, too, there were of another—a peerlessly beautiful creature who ere he had sought the white-faced woman for his wife, had trampled on his affections, and spurned as a useless gift, his offered love. He *hated* her now, he thought;

and the little black-haired child, sleeping so sweetly in its mother's arms, was hateful in his sight, because it bore that woman's name. One, two, three—sounded the clock, and then he fell asleep, dreaming that underneath the willows which grew in the church-yard, far off on Laurel Hill, there were two graves instead of one; that in the house across the common there was a sound of rioting and mirth, unusual in that silent mansion. For *she* was there, the woman whom he had so madly loved, and wherever she went, crowds gathered about her as in the olden time.

"Maude Glendower, why are you here?" he attempted to say, when a clear, silvery voice aroused him from his sleep, and starting up, he listened half in anger, half in disappointment, to the song which little Maude Remington sang, as she sat in the open door awaiting the return of her mother, who had gone for the last time to see the sunshine fall on Harry's grave.

CHAPTER II.

THE JOURNEY.

MRS. KENNEDY looked charmingly in her traveling dress of brown, and the happy husband likened her to a Quakeress, as he kissed her blushing cheek, and called her his "little wife." He had passed through the ceremony remarkably well, standing very erect, making the responses very loud, and squeezing very becomingly the soft white hand on whose third finger he placed the wedding ring—a very small one, by the way†. It was over now, and many of the bridal guests were gone, the minister, too, had gone, and jogging leisurely along upon his sorrel horse, had ascertained the size of his fee, feeling a little disappointed that it was not larger—five dollars seemed so small, when he fully expected twenty, from one of Dr. Kennedy's reputed wealth.

Janet had seen that every thing was done for the comfort of the travelers, and then out behind the smokehouse had scolded herself soundly for crying, when she ought to appear brave, and encourage her young mistress. Not the slightest hint had she received that she was not to follow them in a few weeks, and when at parting little Maude clung to her skirts, beseeching her to go, she comforted the child by telling her what she would bring her in the autumn, when she came. Half a dozen dolls, as many pounds of candy, a dancing jack and a mewling kitten, were promised, and then the faithful creature turned

to the weeping bride, who clasped her hard old hand convulsively, for *she* knew it was a long good-bye. Until the carriage disappeared from view, did Mrs. Kennedy look back through blinding tears to the spot where Janet stood, wiping her eyes with a corner of her stiffly starched white apron, and holding up one foot to keep her from soiling her clean blue cotton stockings, for, in accordance with a superstition peculiar to her race, she had thrown after the travelers a shoe, by way of insuring them good luck.

For once in his life, Dr. Kennedy tried to be very kind and attentive to his bride, who, naturally hopeful and inclined to look upon the brighter side, dried her tears soon after entering the cars, and began to fancy she was very happy in her new position as the wife of Dr. Kennedy. The seat in front of them was turned back and occupied by Maude, who busied herself awhile in watching the fence and the trees, which she said were "running so fast toward Janet and home!" Then her dark eyes would scan curiously the faces of Dr. Kennedy and her mother, resting upon the latter with a puzzled expression, as if she could not exactly understand it. The doctor persisted in calling her *Matilda*, and as she resolutely persisted in refusing to answer to that name, it seemed quite improbable that they would ever talk much together. Occasionally, it is true, he made her some advances, by playfully offering her his hand, but she would not touch it, and after a time, standing upon the seat and turning round, she found more agreeable society in the company of two school-boys who sat directly behind her.

They were evidently twelve or thirteen years of age, and in personal appearance somewhat alike, save that the face of the brown-haired boy was more open, ingenuous,

and pleasing than that of his companion, whose hair and eyes were black as night. A jolt of the cars caused Maude to lay her chubby hand upon the shoulder of the elder boy, who, being very fond of children, caught it within his own, and in this way made her acquaintance. To him she was very communicative, and in a short time he learned that "her name was Maude Remington, that the pretty lady in brown was her mother, and that the *naughty man* was not her father, and never would be, for Janet said so."

This at once awakened an interest in the boys, and for more than an hour they petted and played with the little girl, who, though very gracious to both, still manifested so much preference for the brown-haired, that the other laughingly asked her which she liked the best.

"I like *you* and *you*," was Maude's childlike answer, as she pointed a finger at each.

"But," persisted her questioner, "you like my cousin the best. Will you tell me why?"

Maude hesitated a moment, then laying a hand on either side of the speaker's face, and looking intently into his eyes, she answered, "You don't look as if you meant *for certain*, and he does!"

Had Maude Remington been twenty instead of five, she could not better have defined the difference between those two young lads, and in after-years she had sad cause for remembering words which seemed almost prophetic. At Albany they parted company, for though the boys lived in Rochester, they were to remain in the city through the night, and Dr. Kennedy had decided to go on. By doing so, he would reach home near the close of the next day, beside saving a large hotel bill, and this

last was with him a very weighty reason. But he did not say so to his wife; neither did he tell her that he had left orders for his carriage to be in Canandaigua on the arrival of the noon train, but he said "he was in haste to show her to his daughter—that 'twas a maxim of his to save as much time as possible, and that unless she were very anxious to sleep, he would rather travel all night." So the poor, weary woman, whose head was aching terribly, smiled faintly upon him as she said, "Go on, of course," and nibbled at the hard seed-cakes and harder crackers which he brought her, there not being time for supper in Albany.

It was a long, tedious ride, and though a strong arm was thrown around her, and her head was pillowed upon the bosom of her husband, who really tried to make her as comfortable as possible, Mrs. Kennedy could scarcely refrain from tears as she thought how different was this bridal tour from what she had anticipated. She had fully expected to pass by daylight through the Empire State, and she had thought with how much delight her eye would rest upon the grassy meadows, the fertile plains, the winding Mohawk, the drone-like boats on the canal, the beautiful Cayuga, and the silvery water so famed in song; but, in contrast to all this, she was shut up in a dingy car, whose one dim lamp sent forth a sickly ray and sicklier smell, while without, all was gloomy, dark, and drear. No wonder, then, that when toward morning Maude, who missed her soft, nice bed, began to cry for Janet and for home, the mother too burst forth in tears and choking sobs, which could not be controlled.

"Hush, Matty—don't," and the disturbed doctor shook her very gently; "it will soon be daylight, and 'tis a max"

—here he stopped, for he had no maxim suited to that occasion, and, in a most unenviable frame of mind, he frowned at the crying Maude, and tried to soothe his weeping wife, until at last, as the face of the latter was covered, and the former grew more noisy and unmanageable, he administered a fatherly rebuke in the shape of a *boxed ear*, which had no other effect than the eliciting from the child the outcry, "Let me be, old doctor, you!" if, indeed, we except the long scratch made upon his hand by the little sharp nail of his step-daughter.

At that moment Matty lifted up her head, but as Maude was no tale-bearer, and the doctor hardly dared to tell her that he had thus early taken upon himself the government of her child, she never knew exactly what it was which made Maude's ear so red or her liege lord's face so dark.

It was nearly noon when they arrived at Canandaigua, where the first object which caught Mrs. Kennedy's eye was an old-fashioned carry-all, which her husband honored with the appellation of carriage, said carriage being drawn by two farm-horses, which looked as if oats and corn were to them luxuries unknown.

"I must have a cup of tea," said Mrs. Kennedy, as she saw the black man, John, arranging the baggage upon the rack of the carry-all, and heard her husband bid him hurry, as there was no time to lose. "I must have a cup of tea, my head is aching dreadfully," and her white lips quivered, while the tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Certainly, certainly," answered the doctor, who was in unusually good spirits, having just heard from an acquaintance whom he chanced to meet, that a law-suit, which had long been pending, was decided in his favor, and that the house and lot of a widow would probably

come into his possession. "Certainly, two cups if you like; I should have proposed it myself only I knew old Hannah would have dinner in readiness for us, and 'tis a maxim of mine, that fasting provokes an appetite."

"Hang dis nigger, if he aint a maxin' her so quick!" muttered the darkey, showing his teeth from ear to ear, and coaxing Maude away from her mother, he took her to a restaurant, where he literally crammed her with gingerbread, raisins, and candy, bidding her eat all she wanted at once, for it would be a long time maybe ere she'd have another chance!

"If you please, sar," he said, when at last he had returned to his master, "if you please, Miss Nellie, say how you must fotch her somethin', and the old woman spec's a present in honor of de 'casion."

Dr. Kennedy thought of the law-suit, and so far opened both heart and purse as to buy for Nellie a paper of peanuts, and for Hannah a ten-cent calico apron, after which, he pronounced himself in readiness to go, and in a few moments Mrs. Kennedy was on her way to her new home.

The road led over rocky hills, reminding her so much of Vernon and its surrounding country, that a feeling of rest stole over her and she fell into a quiet sleep, from which she did not awaken until the carriage stopped suddenly and her husband whispered in her ear, "Wake, Matty, wake, we are home at last."

CHAPTER III.

THE NEW HOME.

It was a large, square, wooden building, built in the olden time, with a wide hall in the centre, a tiny portico in front and a long piazza in the rear. In all the town, there was not so delightful a location, for it commanded a view of the country for many miles around, while, from the chamber windows, was plainly discernible, the sparkling Honeoye, whose waters slept so calmly 'mid the hills which lay to the southward. On the grassy lawn in front, tall forest trees were growing, almost concealing the house from view, while their long branches so met together as to form a beautiful arch over the gravelled walk which lead to the front door. It was, indeed, a pleasant spot, and Matty, as she passed through the iron gate, could not account for the feeling of desolation settling down upon her.

"Maybe it's because there are no flowers here—no roses," she thought, as she looked around in vain for her favorites, thinking the while how her first work should be to train a honey-suckle over the door, and plant a rose bush underneath the window.

Poor Matty. Dr. Kennedy had no love for flowers, and the only rose bush he ever noticed was the one which John had planted at his mistress' grave, and even this would, perchance, have been unseen, if he had not scratched his hand unmercifully upon it, as he one day shook the

stone, to see if it were firmly placed in the ground, ere he paid the man for putting it there! It was a maxim of the Dr.'s never to have any thing not strictly for use, consequently his house, both outside and in, was destitute of every kind of ornament, and the bride, as she followed him through the empty hall into the silent parlor, whose bare walls, faded carpet, and uncurtained windows seemed so uninviting, felt a chill creeping over her spirits, and sinking into the first hard chair she came to, she might, perhaps, have cried, had not John who followed close behind with her satchel on his arm, whispered encouragingly in her ear, "Never you mind, missus, your chamber is a heap sight brighter than this, 'case I tended to that myself."

Mrs. Kennedy smiled gratefully upon him, feeling sure that beneath his black exterior there beat a kind and sympathizing heart, and that in him she had an ally and a friend.

"Where is Nellie?" said the Doctor. "Call Nellie, John, and tell your mother we are here."

John left the room, and a moment after a little tiny creature came tripping to the door, where she stopped suddenly, and throwing back her curls, gazed curiously, first at Mrs. Kennedy, and then at Maude, whose large black eyes fastened themselves upon her with a gaze quite as curious and eager as her own. She was more than a year older than Maude, but much smaller in size, and her face seemed to have been fashioned after a beautiful waxen doll, so brilliant was her complexion, and so regular her features. She was naturally affectionate and amiable, too, when suffered to have her own way. Neither was she at all inclined to be timid, and when her father,

taking her hand in his, bade her speak to her new mother, she went unhesitatingly to the lady, and climbing into her lap, sat there very quietly so long as Mrs. Kennedy permitted her to play with her rings, pull her collar, and take out her side-combs, for she had laid aside her bonnet; but when at last her little sharp eyes ferreted out a watch, which she insisted upon having "all to herself," a liberty which Mrs. Kennedy refused to grant, she began to pout, and, sliding from her new mother's lap, walked up to Maude, whose acquaintance she made by asking if she had a pink silk dress?

"No, but I guess Janet will bring me one," answered Maude, whose eyes never for an instant left the face of her step-sister.

She was an enthusiastic admirer of beauty, and Nellie had made an impression upon her at once; so, when the latter said, "What makes you look at me so funny?" she answered, "Because you are so pretty."

This made a place for her at once in the heart of the vain little Nellie, who asked her to go up stairs and see the pink silk dress which "Aunt Kelsey had given her."

As they left the room, Mrs. Kennedy said to her husband, "Your daughter is very beautiful."

Dr. Kennedy liked to have people say that of his child, for he knew she was much like himself, and he stroked his brown beard complacently, as he replied: "Yes, Nellie is rather pretty, and, considering all things, is as well-behaved a child as one often finds. She seldom gets into a passion, or does anything rude," and he glanced at the long scratch upon his hand; but as his wife knew nothing of said scratch, the rebuke was wholly lost, and he continued: "I was anxious that she should be a boy, for

it is a maxim of mine that the oldest child in every family ought to be a son, and so I said, repeatedly, to the late Mrs. Kennedy, who, though a most excellent woman in most matters, was, in others, unaccountably set in her way. I suppose I said some harsh things when I heard it was a daughter, but it can't be helped now," and with a slightly injured air the husband of "the late Mrs. Kennedy" began to pace up and down the room, while the present Mrs. Kennedy puzzled her rather weak brain to know "what in the world he meant."

Meantime, between John and his mother there was a hurried conversation, the former inquiring naturally after the looks of her new mistress.

"Pretty as a pink," answered John, "and neat as a fiddle, with the sweetest little baby ways, but I tell you what 'tis," and John's voice fell to a whisper, "He'll *maxim* her into heaven a heap sight quicker'n he did t'other one; case you see she hain't so much—what you call him—so much *go off* to her as Miss Katy had, and she can't bar his grinding ways. They'll scrush her to onct—see if they don't. But I knows one thing, this yer nigger 'tends to do his duty, and hold up them little cheese-curd hands of her'n, jest as some of them scripiter' folks held up Moses with the bulrushes."

"And what of the young one?" asked Hannah, who had been quite indignant at the thoughts of another child in the family, "what of the young one?"

"Bright as a dollar!" answered John. "Knows more'n a dozen of Nellie, and well she might, for she ain't half as white, and as Master Kennedy says, it's a *maxim* of mine, the blacker the hide, the better the sense!"

By this time, Hannah had washed the dough from her

hands, and taking the roast chicken from the oven, she donned a clean check apron, and started to see the stranger for herself. Although a tolerable good woman, Hannah's face was not very prepossessing, and Mrs. Kennedy intuitively felt that 'twould be long before her former domestic's place was made good by the indolent African. It is true her obeisance was very low, and her greeting kindly enough, but there was about her an inquisitive, and at the same time, rather patronizing air, which Mrs. Kennedy did not like, and she was glad when she at last left the parlor, telling them, as she did so, that "dinner was done ready."

Notwithstanding that the house itself was so large, the dining-room was a small, dark, cheerless apartment, and though she was beginning to feel the want of food, Mrs. Kennedy could scarcely force down a mouthful, for the homesick feeling at her heart; a feeling which whispered to her that the home to which she had come, was not like that which she had left. Dinner being over, she asked permission to retire to her chamber, saying she needed rest, and should feel better after she had slept. Nellie volunteered to lead the way, and as they left the dining-room, old Hannah, who was notoriously lazy, muttered aloud: "A puny, sickly thing. Great help she'll be to me; but I shan't stay to wait on more'n forty more."

Dr. Kennedy had his own private reason for wishing to conciliate Hannah. When he set her free, he made her believe it was her duty to work for him for nothing, and though she soon learned better and often threatened to leave, he had always managed to keep her, for, on the whole, she liked her place, and did not care to change it for one where her task would be much harder. But if the

new wife proved to be sickly, matters would be different, and so she fretted, as we have seen, while the doctor comforted her with the assurance that Mrs. Kennedy was only tired—that she was naturally well and strong, and would undoubtedly be of great assistance when the novelty of her position had worn away.

While this conversation was taking place, Mrs. Kennedy was examining her chamber and thinking many pleasant things of John, whose handiwork was here so plainly visible. All the smaller and more fanciful pieces of furniture which the house afforded had been brought to this room, whose windows looked out upon the lake and the blue hills beyond. A clean white towel concealed the marred condition of the washstand, while the bed, which was made up high and round, especially in the middle, looked very inviting with its snowy spread. A large stuffed rocking chair, more comfortable than handsome, occupied the centre of the room, while better far than all, the table, the mantel and the windows were filled with flowers, which John had begged from the neighboring gardens, and which seemed to smile a welcome upon the weary woman, who, with a cry of delight, bent down and kissed them through her tears.

"Did these come from your garden," she asked of Nellie, who, child-like, answered, "We hain't any flowers. Pa won't let John plant any. He told Aunt Kelsey the land had better be used for potatoes, and Aunt Kelsey said he was too stingy to live."

"Who is Aunt Kelsey?" asked Mrs. Kennedy, a painful suspicion fastening itself upon her, that the lady's opinion might be correct.

"She is pa's sister Charlotte," answered Nellie, "and

lives in Rochester, in a great big house, with the hand-somest things; but she don't come here often, it's so heathenish, she says."

Here spying John, who was going with the oxen to the meadow, she ran away, followed by Maude, between whom and herself there was for the present a most amicable understanding. Thus left alone, Mrs. Kennedy had time for thought, which crowded upon her so fast that, at last throwing herself upon the bed, she wept bitterly, half wishing she had never come to Laurd Hill, but was still at home in her own pleasant cottage. Then hope whispered to her of a brighter day, when things would not seem to her as they now did. She would fix up the desolate old house, she thought—the bare windows which now so stared her in the face, should be shaded with pretty muslin curtains, and she would loop them back with ribbons. The carpet, too, on the parlor floor should be exchanged for a better one, and when her piano and marble table came, the only articles of furniture she had not sold, it would not seem so cheerless and so cold.

Comforted with these thoughts, she fell asleep, resting quietly until, just as the sun had set and it was growing dark within the room, Maude came rushing in, her dress all wet, her face flushed, and her eyes red with tears. She and Nellie had quarreled—nay, actually fought; Nellie telling Maude she was blacker than a *nigger*, and pushing her into the brook, while Maude, in return, had pulled out a handful of the young lady's hair, for which her step-father had shaken her soundly, and sent her to her mother, whom she begged "to go home, and not stay in that old house where the folks were ugly, and the rooms not a bit pretty."

Mrs Kennedy's heart was already full, and drawing Maude to her side, the two homesick children mingled their tears together, until a heavy footstep upon the stairs announced the approach of Dr. Kennedy. Not a word did he say of his late adventure with Maude, and his manner was very kind toward his weary wife, who, with his hand upon her aching forehead, and his voice in her ear, telling her how sorry he was that she was sick, forgot that she had been unhappy.

"Whatever else he may do," she thought, "he certainly loves me," and after a fashion he did perhaps love her. She was a pretty little creature, and her playful, coquettish ways had pleased him at first sight. He needed a wife, and when their mutual friend, who knew nothing of him save that he was a man of integrity and wealth, suggested Matty Renington, he too thought favorably of the matter, and yielding to the fascination of her soft blue eyes, he had won her for his wife, pitying her, it may be, as he sat by her in the gathering twilight, and half guessed that she was homesick. And when he saw how confidently she clung to him, he was conscious of a half-formed resolution to be to her what a husband ought to be. But Dr. Kennedy's resolves were like the morning dew, and as the days wore on, his peculiarities, one after another, were discovered by his wife, who, womanlike, tried to think that he was right and she was wrong.

In due time most of the villagers called upon her, and though they were both intelligent and refined, she did not feel altogether at ease in their presence, for the fancy she had that they regarded her as one who for some reason was entitled to their pity. And in this she was correct. They did pity her, for they remembered another gentle

woman, whose brown hair had turned grey, and whose blue eyes had waxed dim beneath the withering influence of him she called her husband. *She* was dead, and when they saw the young, light-hearted Matty, they did not understand how she could ever have been induced to take that woman's place and wed a man of thirty-eight, and they blamed her somewhat, until they reflected that she knew nothing of him, and that her fancy was probably captivated by his dignified bearing, his manly figure, and handsome face. But these alone they knew could not make her happy, and ere she had been six weeks a wife, they were not surprised that her face began to wear a weary look, as if the burden of life were hard to bear.

As far as she could, she beautified her home, purchasing with her own means several little articles which the Doctor called useless, though he never failed to appropriate to himself the easy chair which she had bought for the sitting-room, and which when she was tired rested her so much. On the subject of curtains, he was particularly obstinate. "There were blinds," he said, "and 'twas a maxim of his never to spend his money for any thing unnecessary."

Still, when Matty bought them herself for the parlor, when her piano was unboxed and occupied a corner which had long been destitute of furniture, and when her marble table stood between the windows, with a fresh bouquet of flowers which John had brought, he exclaimed involuntarily, "How nice this is!" adding the next moment, lest his wife should be too much pleased, "but vastly foolish!"

In accordance with her husband's suggestion, Mrs. Kennedy wrote to Janet, breaking to her as gently as possible the fact that she was not to come, but saying

nothing definite concerning her new home, or her own happiness as a second wife. Several weeks went by, and then an answer came.

"If you had of wanted me," wrote Janet, "I should of come, but bein' you didn't, I've went to live with Mr. Blodgett, who peddles milk, and raises butter and cheese, and who they say is worth a deal of money, and well he may be, for he's saved this forty years."

Then followed a detailed account of her household matters, occupying in all three pages of foolscap, to which was pinned a bit of paper, containing the following:

"Joel looked over my writing and said I'd left out the very thing I wanted to tell the most. We are *married*, me and Joel, and I only hope you are as happy with that Doctor as I am with my old man."

This announcement crushed at once the faint hope which Mrs. Kennedy had secretly entertained, of eventually having Janet to supply the place of Hannah, who was notoriously lazy, and never, under any circumstances, did anything she possibly could avoid. Dr. Kennedy did not tell his wife that he expected her to make it easy for Hannah, so she would not leave them; but he told her how industrious the late Mrs. Kennedy had been, and hinted that a true woman was not above kitchen work. The consequence of this was, that Matty, who really wished to please him, became, in time, a very drudge, doing things which she once thought she could not do, and then, without a murmur, ministering to her exacting husband when he came home from visiting a patient, and declared himself "tired to death." Very still he sat, while her weary little feet ran for the cool drink—the daily paper—or the morning mail; and very happy he looked when her snowy

fingers combed his hair or brushed his threadbare coat; and if, perchance, she sighed amid her labor of love, his ear was deaf, and he did not hear, neither did he see how white and thin she grew, as day by day went by.

Her piano was now seldom touched, for the doctor did not care for music; still he was glad that she could play, for "Sister Kelsey," who was to him a kind of terror, would insist that Nellie should take music lessons, and, as his wife was wholly competent to give them, he would be spared a very great expense. "*Save, save, save,*" seemed to be his motto, and when at church the plate was passed to him, he gave his dime a loving pinch ere parting company with it; and yet none read the service louder, or defended his favorite liturgy more zealously than himself. In some things he was a pattern man, and when once his servant John announced his intention of withdrawing from the Episcopalians and joining himself to the Methodists, who held their meetings in the school-house, he was greatly shocked, and labored long with the degenerate son of Ethiopia, who would render to him no reason for his most unaccountable taste, though he did to Matty, when she questioned him of his choice.

"You see, missus," said he, "I wasn't allus a herrytic, but was as good a 'piscopal as St. George ever had. That's when I lived in Virginny, and was hired out to Marster Morton, who had a school for boys, and who larnt me how to read a little. After I'd arn't a heap of money for Marster Kennedy, he wanted to go to the Legislatur', and some on 'em wouldn't vote for him while he owned a nigger, he set me free, and sent for me to come home. 'Twas hard partin' wid dem boys and Marster Morton, I tell you, but I kinder wanted to see mother, who had been here a

good while, and who, like a fool, was a workin' an' is a workin' for nothin'."

"For nothing!" exclaimed Mrs. Kennedy, a suspicion of the reason why Janet was refused, crossing her mind.

"Yes, marm, for nothin'," answered John, "but I ain't green enough for that, and 'fused outright. Then Marster, who got beat 'lection day, threatened to send me back, but I knew he couldn't do it, and so he agreed to pay eight dollars a month. I could get more some whar else, but I'd rather stay with mother, and so I staid."

"But that has nothing to do with the church," suggested Mrs. Kennedy, and John replied:

"I'm comin' to the p'int now. I lived with Marster Kennedy, and went with him to church, and when I see how he carried on week days, and how peart like he read up Sabba' days, sayin' the Lord's prar and 'Postle's Creed, I began to think thar's somethin' rotten in Denmark, as the boys use to say in Virginny, so when mother, who allus was a roarin' Methodis' asked me to go wid her to meetin', I went, and was never so mortified in my life, for arter the elder had 'xorted a spell at the top of his voice, he sot down and said there was room for others. I couldn't see how that was, bein' he took up the whole chair, and while I was wonderin' what he meant, as I'm a livin' nigger, up got marm and spoke a piece right in meetin'! I never was so shamed, and I kep pullin' at her gownd to make her set down, but the harder I pulled, the louder she hollored, till at last she blowed her breath all away, and down she sot."

"And did any of the rest speak pieces?" asked Mrs. Kennedy, convulsed with laughter, at John's vivid description.

"Bless your heart," he answered with a knowing look, "'twan't a *piece* she was speaking—she was tellin' her 'sperience, but it sounded so like the boys at school that I was deceived, for I'd never seen such work before. But I've got so I like it now, and I believe thar's more 'sistency down in that school house, than thar is in—I won't say the 'Piscapal church, 'case thar's heaps of shinin' lights thar, but if you won't be mad, I'll say more than thar is in Marster Kennedy, who has hisself to thank for my bein' a Methodis'."

Whatever Mrs. Kennedy might have thought, she could not help laughing heartily at John, who was now a decided Methodist, and adorned his profession far more than his selfish, hard-hearted master. His promise of holding up his mistress' hands had been most faithfully kept, and, without any disparagement to Janet, Mrs. Kennedy felt that the loss of her former servant was in a great measure made up to her in the kind negro, who, as the months went by and her face grew thinner each day, purchased with his own money many a little delicacy, which he hoped would tempt her capricious appetite. Maude, too, was a favorite with John, both on account of her *color*, which he greatly admired, and because, poor, ignorant creature though he was, he saw in her the germ of the noble girl, who, in the coming years, was to bear uncomplainingly a burden of care from which the selfish Nellie would unhesitatingly turn away.

Toward Maude the doctor had ever manifested a feeling of aversion, both because of her name, and because she had compelled him to yield when his mind was fully made up to do otherwise. She had resolutely refused to be called Matilda, and as it was necessary for him sometimes

to address her, he called her first, "You girl," then "Mat," and finally arrived at "*Maude*," speaking it always spitefully, as if provoked that he had once in his life been conquered. With the management of her he seldom interfered, for that scratch had given him a timely lesson, and as he did not like to be unnecessarily troubled, he left both Maude and Nellie to his wife, who suffered the latter to do nearly as she pleased, and thus escaped many of the annoyances to which step-mothers are usually subject.

Although exceedingly selfish, Nellie was affectionate in her disposition, and when Maude did not cross her path the two were on the best of terms. Disturbances there were, however—quarrels and fights, in the latter of which, Maude, being the stronger of the two, always came off victor; but these did not last long, and had her husband been to her what he ought, Mrs. Kennedy's life would not have been as dreary as it was. He meant well enough, perhaps, but he did not understand a woman, much less know how to treat her, and as the winter months went by, Matty's heart would have fainted within her, but for a hope which whispered to her, "He will love me better when next summer comes."

CHAPTER IV.

LITTLE LOUIS.

It is just one year since the summer morning when Matty Kennedy took upon herself a second time the duties of a wife, and now she lies in a darkened room, her face white as the winter snow, and her breath scarcely perceptible to the touch, as it comes faintly from her parted lips. In dignified silence the doctor sits by, counting her feeble pulse, while an expression of pride, and almost perfect happiness breaks over his face as he glances toward the cradle, which Hannah has brought from the garret, and where now slept the child born to him that day. His oft repeated maxim that if the first were not a boy the second ought to be, had prevailed at last, and *Dombey* had a son. It was a puny thing, but the father said it looked as Nellie did when she first rested there, and Nellie, holding back her breath and pushing aside her curls, bent down to see the red-faced infant.

"I was never as ugly as that, and I don't love him a bit!" she exclaimed, turning away in disgust; while Maude approached on tip-toe, and kneeling by the cradle side, kissed the unconscious sleeper, whispering as she did so, "*I love you, poor little brother.*"

Darling Maude—blessed Maude—in all your after life, you proved the truth of those low spoken words, "*I love you, poor little brother.*"

For many days did Mrs. Kennedy hover between life and death, never asking for her baby, and seldom noticing her husband, who, while declaring there was no danger, still deemed it necessary, in case any thing should happen, to send for his sister, Mrs. Kelsey, who had not visited him since his last marriage. She was a proud, fashionable woman, who saw nothing attractive in the desolate old house, and who had conceived an idea that her brother's second wife was a sort of nobody, whom he had picked up among the New England hills. But the news of her illness softened her feelings in a measure, and she started for Laurel Hill, thinking that if Mattie died, she hoped a certain dashing, brilliant woman, called *Maude Glen-dower*, might go there and govern the tyrannical doctor, even as he had governed others.

It was late in the afternoon when she reached her brother's house, from which Nellie came running out to meet her, accompanied by Maude. From the latter the lady at first turned disdainfully away, but ere long stole another look at the brown faced girl, about whom there was something very attractive.

"Curtains, as I live!" she exclaimed, as she entered the parlor. "A piano, and marble table, too. Where did these come from?"

"They are ma's, and she's got a baby up-stairs," answered Maude, and the lady's hand rested for an instant on the little curly head, for strange as it may seem, she esteemed more highly a woman who owned a piano and handsome table, than she did one whose worldly possessions were more limited.

After making some changes in her dress, she went up to the sick-room, and as Mattie was asleep, she had ample

time to examine her face, and also to inspect the room, which showed in some one a refined and delicate taste.

"She must be more of a lady than I supposed," she thought, and when at last, her sister-in-law awoke, she greeted her kindly, and during her visit, which lasted nearly two weeks, she exerted herself to be agreeable, succeeding so far that Mattie parted from her at last with genuine regret.

"Poor thing—she'll never see another winter," was Mrs. Kelsey's mental comment, as she bade the invalid good-bye, but in this she was mistaken, for with the falling of the leaf Mattie began to improve, and though she never fully regained her health, she was able again to be about the house, doing far more than she ought to have done, but never uttering a word of complaint, however heavy was the burden imposed upon her.

With Maude and her baby, who bore the name of *Louis*, she found her greatest comfort. He was a sweet, playful child, and sure never before was father so foolishly proud of his son, as was Dr. Kennedy of his. For hours would he sit watching him while he slept, and building castles of the future, when "Louis Kennedy, only son of Dr. Kennedy," should be honored among men. Toward the mother, too, who had borne him such a prodigy, he became a little more indulgent, occasionally suffering her wishes to prevail over his maxims, and on three several occasions giving her a dollar to spend as she pleased. Surely such generosity did not deserve so severe a punishment as was in store for the proud father.

Louis had a most beautiful face, and in his soft, brown eyes there was a "look like the angels," as Maude once said to her mother, who seldom spoke of him without a

sigh, for on her mind a terrible fear was fastening itself. Although mentally as forward as other children, Louis's body did not keep pace with the growth of his intellect, and when he was two years of age, he could not bear his weight upon his feet, but in creeping dragged his limbs slowly, as if in them there was no life—no strength.

"Ma, why don't Louis walk?" asked Maude, one evening when she saw how long it took him to cross the room.

"Loui' tant walk," answered the child, who talked with perfect ease.

The tears came instantly to Mrs. Kennedy's eyes, for, availing herself of her husband's absence, she had that morning consulted another physician, who, after carefully examining Louis's body, had whispered in the poor woman's ear that which made every nerve quiver with pain, while at the same time it made dearer a thousand-fold her baby-boy; for a mother's pity increases a mother's love.

"Say, ma, what is it?" persisted Maude. "Will Louis ever walk?"

"Loui'll never walk," answered the little fellow, shaking his brown curls, and tearing in twain a picture-book which his father had bought him the day before.

"Maude," said Mrs. Kennedy, drawing her daughter to her side, "I must tell somebody or my heart will burst," and laying her head upon the table, she wept aloud.

"Don't try ma, Loui' good," lisped the infant on the floor, while Mrs. Kennedy, drying at last her tears, told to the wondering Maude that Louis was not like other children—that he would probably never have the use of his feet—that a bunch was growing on his back—and he in time would be—she could not say *deformed*, and so she said at last, "he'll be forever lame."

Poor little Maude! How all her childish dreams were blasted! She had anticipated so much pleasure in guiding her brother's tottering footsteps, in leading him to school, to church, and every where, and she could not have him lame.

"Oh, Louis, Louis!" she cried, winding her arms around his neck, as if she would thus avert the dreaded evil.

Very wonderfully the child looked up into her eyes, and raising his waxen hand, he wiped her tears away, saying, as he did so, "Loui' love Maude."

With a choking sob Maude kissed her baby brother, then going back to her mother, whose head still lay upon the table, she whispered, "We will love poor Louis all the more, you and I."

Blessed Maude, we say again, for these were no idle words, and the clinging, tender love with which she cherished her unfortunate brother, ought to have shamed the heartless man, who, when he heard of his affliction, refused to be comforted, and almost cursed the day when his only son was born. He had been absent for a week or more, and with the exception of the time when he first knew he had a son, he did not remember of having experienced a moment of greater happiness than that in which he reached his home, where dwelt his boy—his pride—his idol. Louis was not in the room, and on the mother's face there was an expression of sadness, which at once awakened the father's fears lest something had befallen his child.

"Where is Louis?" he asked. "Has any thing happened to him that you look so pale?"

"Louis is well," answered Matty, and then unable longer to control her feelings, she burst into tears, while the doctor looked on in amazement, wondering if all wo-

men were as nervous and foolish as the two it had been his fortune to marry.

"Oh, husband," she cried, feeling sure of his sympathy, and thinking it better to tell the truth at once; "has it never occurred to you that Louis was not like other children?"

"Of course it has," he answered quickly. "He is a thousand times brighter than any child I have ever known."

"'Tisn't that, 'tish't that, said Matty. "He'll never walk—he's lame—*deformed!*"

"What do you mean?" thundered the doctor, reeling for an instant like a drunken man, then recovering his composure, he listened while Mattie told him what she meant.

At that moment, Maude drew Louis into the room and taking the child in his arms, the doctor examined him for himself, wondering he had never observed before how small and seemingly destitute of life were his lower limbs. The bunch upon the back, though slight as yet, was really there, and Mattie, when questioned, said it had been there for weeks, but she did not tell of it, for she hoped it would go away.

"It will stay until his dying day," he muttered, as he ordered Maude to take the child away. "Louis deformed!" "Louis a cripple! What have I done that I should be thus sorely punished?" he exclaimed, when he was alone with his wife, and then, as he dared not blame the Almighty, he charged it to her until at last his thoughts took another channel—"Maude had dropped him—he knew she had, and Mattie was to blame for letting her handle him so much, when she knew 'twas a maxim of his that children should not take care of children."

He had forgotten the time when his worn out wife had asked him to hire a nurse girl for Louis, and he had answered that "*Maude* was large enough for that." On some points his memory was treacherous, and for days he continued to repine at his hard fate, wishing once in Mattie's presence that Louis had never been born.

"Oh, husband," she cried, "how can you say that! Do you hate our poor boy because he is a cripple?"

"A cripple!" roared the doctor. "Never use that word again in my presence. My son a cripple! I can't have it so! I *wont* have it so! for 'tis a max—"

Here he stopped, being for a second time in his life at a loss what to say.

"Sarve 'em right, sarve 'em right," muttered John, whose quick eye saw every thing. "Ole Sam payin' him off good. He think he'll be in the seventh heaven when he got a boy, and he mighty nigh torment that little gal's life out with his mexens and things—but now he got a boy, he feel a heap like the bad place."

Still much as John rejoiced that his master was so punished, his heart went out in pity toward the helpless child whom he almost worshipped, carrying him often to the fields, where, seeking out the shadiest spot and the softest grass for a throne, he would place the child upon it, and then pay him obeisance by bobbing up and down his woolly head in a manner quite as satisfactory to Louis as if he indeed had been a king and John his loyal subject. Old Hannah, too, was greatly softened, and many a little cake and pie she baked in secret for the child, while even Nellie gave up to him her favorite playthings and her blue eyes wore a pitying look whenever they rested on the poor unfortunate. All loved him seemingly

the more—all, save the cruel father, who, as the months and years rolled on, seemed to acquire a positive dislike to the little boy, seldom noticing him in any way, except to frown if he were brought into his sight. And Louis, with the quick instinct of childhood, learned to expect nothing from his father, whose attention he never tried to attract.

As if to make amends for his physical deformity, he possessed an uncommon mind, and when he was nearly six years of age accident revealed to him the reason of his father's continued coldness, and wrung from him the first tears he had ever shed for his misfortune. He heard one day his mother praying that God would soften her husband's heart toward his poor hunchback boy, who was not to blame for his misfortune—and laying his head upon the broad arm of the chair which had been made for him, he wept bitterly, for he knew now why he was not loved. That night, as in his crib he lay, watching the stars which shone upon him through the window, and wondering if in heaven there were hunchback boys like him, he overheard his father talking to his mother, and the words that father said were never forgotten to his dying day. They were, "Don't ask *me* to be reconciled to a *cripple*! What good can he do me? He will never earn his own living, lame as he is, and will only be in the way."

"Oh, father, father," the cripple essayed to say, but he could not speak, so full of pain was his little, bursting heart, and that night he lay awake, praying that he might die and so be out of the way.

The next morning he asked Maude to draw him to the church-yard where "his other mother," as he called her, was buried. Maude complied, and when they were there,

placed him at his request upon the ground, where stretching himself out at his full length, he said: "Look, Maude, won't mine be a little grave?" then, ere she could answer, the strange question, he continued, "I want to die so bad; and if you leave me lying here in the long grass maybe God's angel will take me up to Heaven. Will I be lame, there, think?"

"Oh, Louis, Louis, what do you mean?" cried Maude, and as well as he could, for the tears he shed, Louis told her what he meant.

"Father don't love me because I'm lame, and he called me a cripple, too. What is a cripple, Maude? Is it any thing *very bad*? and his beautiful brown eyes turned anxiously toward his sister.

He had never heard that word before, and to him it had a fearful significance, even worse than lameness. In an instant Maude knelt by his side—his head was pillowed on her bosom, and in the silent graveyard, with the quiet dead around them, she spoke blessed words of comfort to her brother, telling him what a cripple was, and that because he bore that name he was dearer far to her.

"Your father will love you, too," she said, "when he learns how good you are. He loves Nellie, and—"

Ere she could say more, she was interrupted by Louis, on whose mind another truth had dawned, and who now said, "but he don't love you as he does Nellie. Why not? Are you a *cripple*, too?"

Folding him still closer in her arms, and kissing his fair, white brow, Maude answered: "Your father, Louis, is not mine—for mine is dead, and his grave is far away. I came here to live when I was a little girl, not quite as old

as you, and Nellie is not my sister, though you are my darling brother."

"And do you love father?" asked Louis, his eyes still fixed upon her face as if he would read the truth.

Every feeling of Maude Remington's heart answered, "No," to that question, but she could not say so to the boy, and she replied, "Not as I could love my own father—neither does he love me, for I am not his child."

This explanation was not then wholly clear to Louis, but he understood that there was a barrier between his father and Maude, and this of itself was sufficient to draw him more closely to the latter, who, after that day, cherished him, if possible, more tenderly than she had done before, keeping him out of his father's way, and cushioning his little crutches so they could not be heard, for she rightly guessed that the sound of them was hateful to the harsh man's ears.

Maude was far older than her years, and during the period of time over which we have passed so briefly, she had matured both in mind and body, until now at the age of twelve, she was a self-reliant little woman on whom her mother wholly depended for comfort and counsel. Very rapidly was Mrs. Kennedy passing from the world, and as she felt the approach of death, she leaned more and more upon her daughter, talking to her often of the future and commending Louis to her care, when with her he would be motherless. Maude's position was now a trying one, for, when her mother became too ill to leave her room, and the doctor refused to hire extra help, saying, "two great girls were help enough," it was necessary for her to go into the kitchen, where she vainly tried to conciliate old Hannah, who "wouldn't mind a chit of a

girl, and wouldn't fret herself either if things were not half done."

From the first Nellie resolutely refused to work—"it would black her hands," she said, and as her father never remonstrated, she spent her time in reading, admiring her pretty face, and drumming upon the piano, which Maude, who was fonder even than Nellie of music, seldom found time to touch. One there was, however, who gave to Maude every possible assistance, and this was *John*. "Having tried his hand," as he said, "at every thing in Marster Norton's school," he proved of invaluable service—sweeping, dusting, washing dishes, cleaning knives, and once ironing Dr. Kennedy's shirts, when old Hannah was in what he called her "tantrums." But alas for John—the entire print of the iron upon the bosom of one, to say nothing of the piles of starch upon another, and more than all, the tremendous scolding which he received from the owner of said shirt, warned him never to turn laundress again, and in disgust he gave up his new vocation, devoting his leisure moments to the cultivation of flowers, which he carried to his mistress, who smiled gratefully upon him, saying they were the sweetest she had ever smelt. And so each morning a fresh bouquet was laid upon her pillow, and as she inhaled their perfume, she thought of her New England home, which she would never see again—thought, too, of Janet, whose cheering words and motherly acts would be so grateful to her now when she so much needed care.

"'Tis a long time since I've heard from her," she said one day to Maude. "Suppose you write to-morrow, and tell her I am sick—tell her, too, that the sight of her would almost make me well, and maybe she will come,"

and on the sick woman's face there was a joyous expression as she thought how pleasant it would be to see once more one who had breathed the air of her native hills—had looked upon her Harry's grave—nay, had known her Harry when in life, and wept over him in death.

Poor, lonesome, homesick woman! Janet shall surely come in answer to your call, and ere you deem it possible her shadow shall fall across your threshold—her step be heard upon the stairs—her hand be clasped in yours!

CHAPTER V.

MRS. JANET BLODGETT.

It was a chilly, rainy afternoon toward the latter part of August. John was gone, the doctor was cross, and Hannah was cross. Nellie, too, was unusually irritable, and venting her spite upon Hannah because there was nothing for dinner fit to eat, and upon Maude because the house was so desolate and dark, she crept away up stairs, and wrapping a shawl round her, sat down to a novel, pausing occasionally to frown at the rain which beat at the windows, or the wind as it roared dismally through the trees. While thus employed, she heard the sound of wheels, and looking up, saw standing before their gate a muddy wagon, from which a little, dumpy figure in black was alighting, carefully holding up her alpaca dress, and carrying in one hand a small box which seemed to be full of flowers.

"She must have come to stay a long time," thought Nellie, as she saw the piles of baggage which the driver was depositing upon the stoop. "Who can it be?" she continued, as she recalled all her aunts and cousins, and found that none of them answered the description of this woman, who knocked loudly at the door, and then walked in to shelter herself from the storm.

"Forlornity!" Nellie heard her exclaim, as she left the chamber in answer to the summons. "Forlornity! No table, no hat-stand, no nothin', and the dingiest old ile-

cloth! What does it mean? Your servant, Miss," she added, dropping a curtesy to Nellie, who now stood on the stairs, with her finger between the pages of her book, so as not to lose the place. "I guess I've made a mistake," said the woman; "is this Dr. Canady's?"

"It is," answered Nellie, and the stranger continued, "Dr. Canady who married the widder Remington?"

"The same," returned Nellie, thinking how unmercifully she would tease Maude should this prove to be any of her relations.

"And who be you?" asked the stranger, feeling a little piqued at the coldness of her reception.

"I am Miss Helen—Dr. Kennedy's daughter," answered the young lady, assuming an air of dignity, which was not at all diminished by the very expressive "Mortal!" which dropped from the woman's lips.

"Can I do any thing for you?" asked Nellie, and the stranger answered: "Yes, go and call Maude, but don't tell her who I am."

She forgot that Nellie did not herself know who she was, and sitting down upon her trunk, she waited while Nellie hurried to the kitchen, where, over a smoky fire, Maude was trying in vain to make a bit of nicely browned toast for her mother, who had expressed a wish for some thing good to eat.

"Here, Maude," called out Nellie, "your grandmother or aunt has come, I guess, and wants to see you in the hall."

"It's Janet,—it's Janet, I know," screamed Maude, and leaving her slice of bread to burn and blacken before the fire, she hurried away, while Nellie who had heard nothing of the letter sent the week before, wondered much

who the "witched old thing with the poking black bonnet could be."

With a cry of delight, Maude wound her arms around the neck of her old nurse, whom she knew in a moment, though Janet had more difficulty in recognizing the little girl of other years, in the womanly looking maiden before her.

"It beats all, how you've changed," she said, "though your eyes and hair are the same," and she passed her hand caressingly over the short glossy curls. Then looking intently in Maude's face she continued. "You've grown handsome, child."

"No, no, not handsome, Janet; Nellie is the beauty of the house," and Maude shook her head mournfully, for on the subject of beauty, she was a little sensitive, her sister always pronouncing her "a fright," and manifesting a most unamiable spirit if any one complimented her in the least.

"What, that yaller haired, white face chit, who went for you?" rejoined Janet. "No such thing; but tell me now of your marm. How sick is she, and what of the little boy? Is he much deformed?"

"Come in here," said Maude, leading the way into the parlor, and drawing a chair close to Janet, she told all she deemed it necessary to tell.

But the quick-witted Janet knew there was something more, and casting a scornful glance around the room, she said: "You are a good girl, Maude; but you can't deceive an old girl like me. I knew, by the tremblin' way you writ, that somethin' was wrong, and started the first blessed morning after gettin' your letter. I was calculating to come pretty soon, any way, and had all my arrange-

ments made. So I can stay a good long spell—always, mebbby—for I'm a widder now," and she heaved a few sighs to the memory of Mr. Joel Blodgett, who, she said, "had been dead a year," adding, in a whisper, "but there's one consolation—he willed me all his property," and she drew from her belt a huge silver time-piece, which she was in the habit of consulting quite often, by way of showing that "she could carry a watch as well as the next one."

After a little her mind came back from her lamented husband, and she gave Maude a most minute account of her tedious ride in a lumber-wagon from Canandaigua to Laurel Hill, for the stage had left when she reached the depot, and she was in too great a hurry to remain at the hotel until the next morning.

"But what of that doctor—do you like him?" she said at last, and Maude answered: "Never mind him now; let us see mother first, or rather let me see to her dinner," and she arose to leave the room.

"You don't like him," continued Janet, "and I knew you wouldn't; but your poor mother, I pity her. Didn't you say you was gettin' her something to eat? She's had a good time waitin', but I'll make amends by seein' to her dinner, myself," and spite of Maude's endeavors to keep her back, she followed on into the disorderly kitchen, from which Nellie had disappeared, and where old Hannah sat smoking her pipe as leisurely as if on the table there were not piles of unwashed dishes, to say nothing of the unswept floor and dirty hearth.

"What a hole!" was Janet's involuntary exclamation, to which Hannah responded a most contemptuous "umph," and thus was the war-cry raised on either side. "What was you goin' to git for your mother?" asked Janet, with-

out deigning to notice the portly African, who smoked on in dignified silence.

"Toast and tea," answered Maude, and casting a deprecating glance at the fire, Janet continued: "You can't make any toast fit for a heathen to eat by that fire. Aint there any dry wood—kindlin' nor nothin'?" and she walked into the wood-shed, where, spying a pine board, she seized the axe, and was about to commence operations, when Hannah called out: "Ole Marster'll be in yer har, if you tache that."

"I aint afraid of your old marster," answered Janet, and in a moment, the board which Dr. Kennedy would not suffer John to use, because he *might* want it for something, was crackling on the fire.

The hearth was swept, the tea-kettle hung in the blaze, and then, with a look of perfect delight, Janet sat down to make the toast, fixing it just as she knew Matty liked it best.

"Biled eggs will be good for her *digester*, and if I only had one dropped in water," she said, and quick as thought Maude brought her one, while Hannah growled again, "Ole marster'll raise de ruff, case he put 'em away to sell."

"Ole marster be hanged!" muttered Janet, breaking not one but three into the water, for her own stomach began to clamor for food.

Every thing was ready at last; a clean towel covered the server, the fragrant black tea was made, the boiled egg was laid upon the toast, and then Janet said, "She ought to have a *rellish*—preserves, jelly, baked-apple, or somethin'," and she opened a cupboard door; while Hannah, springing to her feet, exclaimed, "Quit dat; thar aint no sich truck in dis house."

But Janet's sharp eye had discovered behind a pile of papers, rags, and dried herbs, a tumbler of currant jelly, which Hannah had secretly made and hidden away for her own private eating. Hannah's first impulse was to snatch the jelly from Janet's hand, but feeling intuitively that in the resolute Scotchwoman she had a mistress, and fearing lest Maude should betray her to the doctor, she exclaimed, "If that aint the very stuff Miss Ruggles sent in for Miss Matty! I forgot it till this blessed minit!" and shutting the cupboard door, she stood with her back against it lest Janet should discover sundry other delicacies hidden away for a like purpose.

"Mother has not had a feast like this—and she'll enjoy it so much," said Maude, as she started up the stairs followed by Janet, who, ere they reached the chamber, suddenly stopped, saying, "I tell you what 'tis, if she knows I'm here she won't eat a *mou'ful*, so you say nothin', and when she's through I'll come."

This seemed reasonable to Maude, who, leaving Janet to look through a crevice in the door, entered alone into her mother's presence. Mrs. Kennedy had waited long for Maude, and at last, weary with listening to the rain, which made her feel so desolate and sad, she fell asleep, as little Louis at her side had done before her; but Maude's cheering voice awoke her.

"Look, mother," she cried, "see the nice dinner!" and her own eyes fairly danced as she placed the tray upon the table before her mother, who, scarcely less pleased, exclaimed, "A boiled egg—and jelly, too!—I've wanted them both so much. How did it happen?"

"Eat first, and then I'll tell you," answered Maude, propping her up with pillows, and setting the server in her lap.

"It tastes like old times—like Janet," said the invalid, and from the room without, where Janet watched, there came a faint, choking sound, which Matty thought was the wind, and which Maude knew was Janet.

Through the door she had caught sight of her mistress, whose white, wasted face wrung from her that cry. Stuffing her handkerchief into her mouth, she waited until toast, tea, egg, and all had disappeared, then, with the exclamation, "She's et 'em all up slick and clean," she walked into the room.

It would be impossible to describe that meeting, when the poor sick woman bowed her weary head upon the motherly bosom of her faithful domestic, weeping most piteously while Janet folded her lovingly in her arms, saying to her soothingly, "Nay, now, Mattie darling—nay, my bonnie bird—take it easy like—take it easy, and you'll feel all the better."

"You wont leave me, will you?" sobbed Mattie, feeling that it would not be hard to die with Janet standing near.

"No, honey, no," answered Janet, "I'll stay till one or t'other of us is carried down the walk and across the common, where them gravestones is standin', which I noticed when I drove up."

"It will be me, Janet. It will be me," said Mattie. "They will bury me beneath the willows, for the other one is lying there, oh, so peacefully."

Louis was by this time awake, and taking him upon her lap, Janet laughed and cried alternately, mentally resolving that so long as she should live, she would befriend the little helpless boy, whose face, she said, "was far winsomer than any she had ever seen."

Then followed many mutual inquiries, during which Mattie learned that Janet was a widow, and had really come to stay if necessary.

"I'm able now to live as I please, for I've got property," said Janet, again consulting the silver watch, as she usually did when speaking of her husband's will.

Many questions, too, did Mattie ask concerning her former home—her friends—her flowers—and Harry's grave; "was it well kept now, or was it overrun with weeds?"

To this last question Janet did not reply directly, but making some excuse for leaving the room, she soon returned, bearing in one hand a box in which a small rose-bush was growing. In the other hand she held a beautiful bouquet, which having been kept moist, looked almost as fresh as when it was first gathered. This she gave to Mattie, saying, "They grew on Harry's grave. I picked 'em myself yesterday morning before I left; and this," pointing to the rose-bush, "is a root I took from there last spring on purpose for you, for I meant to visit you this fall."

Need we say those flowers were dearer to Mattie than the wealth of the Indies would have been! They had blossomed on Harry's grave—his dust had added to them life, and as if they were indeed a part of him, she hugged them to her heart—kissing them through her tears and blessing Janet for the priceless gift.

"Don't tell *him*, though," she whispered, and a deep flush mounted to her cheek, as on the stairs she heard a heavy footstep, and knew that Dr. Kennedy was coming!

He had been in the kitchen, demanding of Hannah, "Whose is all that baggage in the hall?" and Hannah,

glad of an opportunity to "free her mind," had answered, "Some low lived truck or other that they called 'Janet,' and a body'd s'pose she owned the house, the way she went on, splittin' up yer board for kindlin', makin' Missus' toast swim in butter, and a bilin' three of them eggs you laid away to sell. If *she* stays here, this nigger wont—that's my 'pinion," and feeling greatly injured she left the kitchen, while Dr. Kennedy, with a dark, moody look upon his face, started for the sick room.

He knew very well who his visitor was, and when his wife said, "Husband, this is my faithful Janet, or rather Mrs. Blodgett now. Wasn't it kind in her to come so far to see me?" he merely nodded coolly to Mrs. Blodgett, who nodded as coolly in return, then turning to his wife, he said, "You seem excited, my dear, and this ought not to be. 'Tis a maxim of mine that company is injurious to sick people. What do you think, Mrs. Blodgett?"

Mrs. Blodgett didn't think any thing save that he was a most disagreeable man, and as she could not say this in his presence, she made no particular answer. Glancing toward the empty plate which stood upon the table, he continued, "Hannah tells me, my dear, that you have eaten three boiled eggs. I wonder at your want of discretion, when you know how indigestible they are," and his eye rested reprovingly on Janet, who now found her tongue, and starting up, exclaimed, "One biled egg wont hurt any body's digester, if it's ever so much out of kilter—but the jade lied. Two of them eggs I cooked for myself, and I'll warrant she's guzzled 'em down before this. Any way, I'll go and see," and she arose to leave the room.

Just as she reached the door, the doctor called after

her, saying, "Mrs. Blodgett, I observed a trunk or two in the lower hall, which I presume are yours. Will you have them left there, or shall I bring them up to your chamber? You will stay all night with us, of course!"

For an instant Janet's face was crimson, but forcing down her wrath for Mattie's sake, she answered, "I shall probably stay as *long* as that," and slamming together the door she went down stairs, while Mattie said, sadly, "Oh, husband, how could you thus insult her when you knew she had come to stay awhile at least, and that her presence would do me so much good?"

"How should I know she had come to stay, when I've heard nothing about it," was the doctor's reply; and then in no mild terms he gave his opinion of the lady—said opinion being based on what old Hannah had told him.

There were tears in Mattie's eyes, and they dropped from her long eye-lashes, as, taking the doctor's hand, she said: "Husband, you know that I'm going to die—that ere the snow is falling you will be a second time alone. And you surely will not refuse me when I ask that Janet shall stay until the last. When I am gone you will, perhaps, be happier in the remembrance that you granted me one request."

There was something in the tone of her voice far more convincing than her words, and when she added, "She does not expect wages, for she has money of her own," Dr. Kennedy yielded the point, prophesying the while that there would be trouble with Hannah.

Meantime, Mrs. Blodgett had wended her way to the kitchen, meeting in the way with Nellie, around whose mouth there was a substance greatly resembling the yolk of an egg! Thus prepared for the worst, Janet was not

greatly disappointed when she found that her eggs had been disposed of by both the young lady and Hannah, the latter of whom was too busy with her dishes to turn her head, or in any way acknowledge the presence of a second person.

"Joel Blodgett's widow ought to be above havin' words with a nigger," was Janet's mental comment as she contented herself with a slice of bread and a cup of tea, which, by this time, was of quite a reddish hue.

Her hunger being satisfied, she began to feel more amiably disposed toward the old negress, whose dishes she offered to wipe. This kindness was duly appreciated by Hannah, and that night, in speaking of Janet to her son, she pronounced her "not quite so *onery* a white woman as she at first took her to be."

As the days wore on, Janet's presence in the family was felt in various ways. To Mattie, it brought a greater degree of happiness than she had experienced since she left her New England home, while even the doctor acknowledged an increased degree of comfort in his household, though not willing at first to attribute it to its proper source. He did not like Janet; her ideas were too extravagant for him, and on several different occasions he hinted quite strongly that she was not wanted there; but Janet was perfectly invincible to hints, and when, at one time, he embodied them in language that could not be misunderstood, telling her, "'twas a maxim of his, that if a person had a home of their own they had better stay there;" she promptly replied, that "'twas a maxim of hers to stay where she pleased, particularly as she was a woman of property," and so, as she pleased to stay there, she staid!

It took but a short time for her to understand the Doctor, and to say that she disliked him, would but feebly express the feeling of aversion with which she regarded him. Not a word, however, would Mattie admit, of past or present unkindness—neither was it necessary that she should, for Janet saw it all—saw how “old maxim,” as she called him, had worried her life away, and while cherishing for him a sentiment of hatred, she strove to comfort her young mistress, who grew weaker and weaker every day, until at last the husband himself, aroused to a sense of her danger, strove by little acts of kindness unusual in him to make amends for years of wrong. Experience is a thorough teacher, and he shrunk from the bitter memories which spring from the grave of a neglected wife, and he would rather that Mattie, when she died, should not turn away from him, shuddering at his touch, and asking him to take his hand from off her brow, just as one brown-haired woman had done. This feeling of his was appreciated by Janet, who in proportion as he became tender toward Mattie, was respectful to him, until at last there came to be a tolerably good understanding between them, and she was suffered in most matters, to have her own way.

With John she was a special favorite, and through his instrumentality open hostilities were prevented between herself and his mother, until the latter missed another cup of jelly from its new hiding-place. Then, indeed, the indignant African announced her intention of going at once to “Miss Ruggles’s,” who had offered her “twelve shillings a week, and a heap of leisure.”

“Let her go,” said John, who knew Mrs. Ruggles to be a fashionable woman, the mother of nine children,

whose ages varied from one to fifteen; “let her go—she’ll be glad to come back,” and the sequel proved he was right, for just as it was beginning to grow light on the second day of her absence, some one rapped at his window, and a half-crying voice whispered, “Let me in, John; I’ve been out to sarvice enough.”

John complied with the request, and when Janet came down to the kitchen, how was she surprised at finding *Hannah* there, leisurely grinding her coffee, with an innocent look upon her sable face as if nothing had ever happened. John’s raillery, however, loosened her tongue at last, and very minutely she detailed her grievances. “She had done a two week’s washing, besides all the work, and the whole of them young ones under her feet into the bargain. Then at night, when she hoped for a little rest, Mrs. Ruggles had gone off to a party and staid till midnight, leaving her with that squallin’ brat; but never you mind,” said she, “I poured a little *paregol* down its throat, or my name ain’t Hannah,” and with a sigh of relief at her escape from “Miss Ruggles,” she finished her story and resumed her accustomed duties, which for many weeks she faithfully performed, finding but little fault with the frequent suggestions of Mrs. Janet Blodgett, whose rule in the household was for the time being, firmly established.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MOTHER.

FROM the tall trees which shade the desolate old house the leaves have fallen one by one, and the November rain makes mournful music, as in the stillness of the night it drops upon the withered foliage, softly, slowly, as if weeping for the sorrow which has come upon the household. Mattie Kennedy is dead; and in the husband's heart there is a gnawing pain, such as he never felt before; not even when *Katy* died; for *Katy*, though pure and good, was not so wholly unselfish as Mattie had been, and in thinking of her, he could occasionally recall an impatient word; but from Mattie, none. Gentle, loving and beautiful, she had been to him in life, and now, beautiful in death, she lay in the silent parlor, on the marble table she had brought from home, while he,—oh, who shall tell what thoughts were busy at his heart, as he sat there alone, that dismal, rainy night.

In one respect his wishes had been gratified; Mattie had not turned from him in death. She had died within his arms; but so long as the light of reason shone in her blue eyes,—so long had they rested on the rose-bush within the window,—the rose-bush brought from Harry's grave! Nestled among its leaves was a half-opened bud, and when none could hear, she whispered softly to Janet, "Place it in my bosom just as you placed one years ago, when I was Harry's bride."

To Nellie and to Maude she had spoken blessed words of comfort, commending to the latter as to a second mother the little Louis, who, trembling with fear, had hidden beneath the bedclothes, so that he could not see the white look upon her face. Then to her husband she had turned, pleading with all a mother's tenderness for her youngest born—her unfortunate one.

"Oh, husband," she said, "you *will* care for him when I am gone. You *will* love my poor, crippled boy! Promise me this, and death will not be hard to meet. Promise me, wont you?" and the voice was very, very faint.

He could not refuse, and bending low, he said, "Matty, I will, I will."

"Bless you, my husband, bless you for that," were Mattie's dying words, for she never spoke again.

It was morning then,—early morning, and a long, dreary day had intervened, until at last it was midnight, and silence reigned throughout the house. Maude, Nellie, Janet and John, had wept themselves sick, while in little Louis's bosom there was a sense of desolation which kept him wakeful, even after Maude had cried herself to sleep. Many a time that day had he stolen into the parlor, and climbing into a chair, as best he could, had laid his baby cheek against the cold, white face, and smoothing with his dimpled hand, the shining hair, had whispered, "Poor, sick mother, wont you speak to Louis any more?"

He knew better than most children of his age what was meant by death, and as he lay awake, thinking how dreadful it was to have no mother, his thoughts turned toward his father, who had that day been too much absorbed in his own grief to notice him.

"Maybe he'll love me some now ma is dead," he thought,

and with that yearning for paternal sympathy natural to the motherless, he crept out of bed, and groping his way with his noiseless crutches to his father's door, he knocked softly for admittance.

"Who's there?" demanded Dr. Kennedy, every nerve thrilling to the answer.

"It's me, father; won't you let me in, for it's dark out here, and lonesome, with her lying in the parlor. Oh, father, won't you love me a little, now mother's dead? I can't help it because I'm lame, and, when I'm a man, I will earn my own living. I won't be in the way. Say, pa, will you love me?"

He remembered the charges his father had preferred against him, and the father remembered them too. She to whom the cruel words were spoken was gone from him now and *her* child, *their* child was at the door, pleading for his love. Could he refuse? No, by every kindly feeling, by every parental tie, we answer *no*, he could not, and opening the door he took the little fellow in his *arms*, hugging him to his bosom, while tears, the first he had shed for many a year, fell like rain upon the face of his crippled boy. Like some mighty water, which breaking through its prison walls, seeks again its natural channel, so did his love go out toward the child so long neglected, the child who was not now to him a cripple. He did not think of the deformity, he did not even see it. He saw only the beautiful face, the soft brown eyes, and silken hair of the little one, who ere long fell asleep, murmuring in his dreams, "He loves me, ma, he does."

Surely the father can not be blamed, if when he looked again upon the calm face of the dead, he fancied that it wore a happier look, as if the whispered words of Louis

had reached her unconscious ear. Very beautiful looked Mattie in her coffin—for thirty years had but slightly marred her youthful face, and the doctor, as he gazed upon her, thought within himself, "she was almost as fair as Maude Glendower."

"Then, as his eye fell upon the rosebud which Janet had laid upon her bosom, he said, "'Twas kind in Mrs. Blodgett to place it there, for Mattie was fond of flowers;" but he did not dream how closely was that rosebud connected with a grave made many years before.

Thoughts of Maude Glendower and mementos of Harry Remington meeting together at Mattie's coffin! Alas, that such should be our life!

Underneath the willows, and by the side of *Katy*, was Mattie laid to rest, and then the desolate old house seemed doubly desolate—Maude mourning truly for her mother, while the impulsive Nellie, too, wept bitterly, for one whom she had really loved. To the doctor, however, a new feeling had been born, and in the society of his son, he found a balm for his sorrow, becoming ere long, to all outward appearance, the same exacting, overbearing man he had been before. The blows are hard and oft repeated which break the solid rock, and there *will* come a time when that selfish nature shall be subdued and broken down; but 'tis not yet—not yet.

And now, leaving him a while to himself, we will pass on to a period when Maude herself shall become in reality the heroine of our story.

CHAPTER VII.

PAST AND PRESENT.

FOUR years and a half have passed away since the dark November night when Matty Kennedy died, and in her home all things are not as they were then. Janet, the presiding genius of the household, is gone—married a second time, and by this means escaped, as she verily believes, the embarrassment of refusing outright to be *Mrs. Dr. Kennedy, No. 3!* Not that Dr. Kennedy ever entertained the slightest idea of making her his wife, but knowing how highly he valued money, and being herself “a woman of property,” Janet came at last to fancy that he had serious thoughts of offering himself to her. He, on the contrary, was only intent upon the best means of removing her from his house, for, though he was not insensible to the comfort which her presence brought, it was a comfort for which he paid too dearly. Still he endured it for nearly three years, but at the end of that time he determined that she should go away, and as he dreaded a scene, he did not tell her plainly what he meant, but *hinted*, and with each hint the widow groaned afresh over her lamented Joel.

At last, emboldened by some fresh extravagance, he said to her one day: “Mrs. Blodgett, ah—ahem,” here he stopped, while Mrs. Blodgett, thinking her time had come, drew out Joel’s picture, which latterly she carried in her pocket, so as to be ready for any emergency.

“Mrs. Blodgett, are you paying attention?” asked the doctor, observing how intently she was regarding the picture of the deceased.

“Yes, yes,” she answered, and he continued: “Mrs. Blodgett, I hardly know what to say, but I’ve been thinking for some time past”—

“I know you’ve been thinking,” interrupted the widow, “but it won’t do an atom of good, for my mind was made up long ago, and I shan’t do it, and if you’ve any kind of feelings for Matty, which you hain’t, nor never had, you wouldn’t think of such a thing, and I know, as well as I want to know, that it’s my *property*, and nothin’ else, which has put such an idee into your head!”

Here, overcome with her burst of indignation, she began to cry, while the doctor, wholly misunderstanding her, attempted to smooth the matter somewhat by saying: “I had no intention of distressing you, Mrs. Blodgett, but I thought I might as well free my mind. Were you a poor woman, I should feel differently, but knowing you have money”—

“Wretch!” fairly screamed the insulted Janet. “So you confess my property is at the bottom of it, but I’ll fix it. I’ll put an end to it,” and in a state of great excitement she rushed from the room.

Just across the way, a newly-fledged lawyer had hung out his sign, and thither, that very afternoon, the wrathful widow wended her way, nor left the dingy office until one-half of her *property*, which was far greater than any one supposed it to be, was transferred by deed of gift to Maude Remington, who was to come in possession of it on her eighteenth birthday, and was to inherit the remainder by will at the death of the donor.

"That fixes him," she muttered, as she returned to the house, "that fixes old maxim good; to think of his insultin' me, by ownin' right up that 'twas my *property* he was after, the rascal! I wouldn't have him if there warn't another man in the world!" and entering the room where Maude was sewing, she astonished the young girl by telling her what she had done. "I have made you my heir," said she, tossing the deed of gift and the will into Maude's lap. "I've made you my heir; and the day you're eighteen you'll be worth five thousand dollars, besides havin' the interest to use between this time and that. Then, if I ever die, you'll have five thousand more. Joel Blodgett didn't keep thirty cows and peddle milk for nothin'."

Maude was at first too much astonished to comprehend the meaning of what she heard, but she understood it at last, and then, with many tears, thanked the eccentric woman for what she had done, and asked the reason for this unexpected generosity.

"'Cause I like you!" answered Janet, determined not to injure Maude's feelings by letting her know how soon her mother had been forgotten. "'Cause I like you, and always meant to give it to you. But don't tell any one how much 'tis, for if the old fool widowers round here know I am still worth five thousand dollars, they'll like enough be botherin' me with offers, hopin' I'll change my will, but I shan't. I'll teach 'em a trick or two, the good-for-nothin' old maxim."

The latter part of this speech was made as Janet was leaving the room, consequently Maude did not hear it, neither would she have understood if she had. She knew her nurse was very peculiar, but she never dreamed it pos-

sible for her to fancy that Dr. Kennedy wished to make her his wife, and she was greatly puzzled to know why she had been so generous to her. But Janet knew; and when a few days afterward, Dr. Kennedy, determining upon a fresh attempt to remove her from his house, came to her side, as she was sitting alone in the twilight, she felt glad that one half her property at least was beyond her control.

"Mrs. Blodgett," he said, clearing his throat, and looking considerably embarrassed, "Mrs. Blodgett."

"Well, what do you want of Mrs. Blodgett?" was the widow's testy answer, and the doctor replied, "I did not finish what I wished to say to you the other day, and it's a maxim of mine, if a person has any thing on his mind, he had better tell it at once."

"Certainly, ease yourself off, do," and Janet's little gray eyes twinkled with delight, as she thought how crest-fallen he would look when she told him her property was gone.

"I was going, Mrs. Blodgett," he continued, "I was going to *propose* to you"—

He never finished the sentence, for the widow sprang to her feet, exclaiming, "It's of no kind of use! I've gin my property all to Maude; half of it the day she's eighteen, and the rest on't is willed to her when I die, so you may as well let me alone," and feeling greatly flurried with what she verily believed to have been an offer, she walked away, leaving the doctor to think her the most inexplicable woman he ever saw.

The next day Janet received an invitation to visit her husband's sister who lived in Canada. The invitation was accepted, and to his great delight, the doctor saw her

drive from his door, just one week after his last amusing interview. In Canada, Janet formed the acquaintance of a man full ten years her junior. He had been a distant relative of her husband, and knowing of her *property*, asked her to be his wife. For several days Janet studied her face to see what was in it, "which made every *man* in Christendom want her!" and concluding at last, that "handsome is that handsome does," said "Yes," and made *Peter Hopkins* the happiest of men.

There was a bridal trip to Laurel Hill, where the new husband ascertained that the half of that for which he had married, was beyond his reach; but being naturally of a hopeful nature, he did not despair of eventually changing the will, so he swallowed his disappointment, and redoubled his attentions to his mother-wife, now *Mrs. Janet Blodgett Hopkins*.

Meantime, the story that Maude was an heiress, circulated rapidly, and, as the lawyer kept his own counsel, and Maude, in accordance with Janet's request, never told how much had been given her, the amount was doubled, nay, in some cases trebled, and she suddenly found herself a person of considerable importance, particularly in the estimation of Dr. Kennedy, who, aside from setting a high value upon money, fancied he saw a way by which he himself could reap some benefit from his step-daughter's fortune. If Maude had money, she certainly ought to pay for her board, and so he said to her one day, prefacing his remarks with his stereotyped phrase, that "'twas a maxim of his, that one person should not live upon another if they could help it."

Since Janet's last marriage, Maude had taken the entire management of affairs, and without her, there would have

been but little comfort or order in a household whose only servant was old and lazy, and whose eldest daughter was far too proud to work. This Maude knew, and with a flush of indignation upon her cheek, she replied to her step-father: "Very well, sir, I can pay for my board, if you like; but boarders, you know, never trouble themselves with the affairs of the kitchen."

The doctor was confounded. He knew he could not well dispense with Maude's services, and it had not before occurred to him that a housekeeper and boarder were two different persons.

"Ah—yes—just so," said he, "I see I'm laboring under a mistake; you prefer working for your board—all right," and feeling a good deal more disconcerted than he ever supposed it possible for *him* to feel, he gave up the contest.

Maude was at this time nearly sixteen years of age, and during the next year she was to all intents and purposes the *housekeeper*, discharging faithfully every duty and still finding time to pursue her own studies and superintend the education of little Louis, to whom she was indeed a second mother. She was very fond of books, and while Janet was with them, she had with Nellie attended the seminary at Laurel Hill, where she stood high in all her classes, for learning was with her a delight, and when at last it seemed necessary for her to remain at home, she still devoted a portion of each day to her studies, reciting to a teacher who came regularly to the house, and whom she paid with her own money. By this means she was at the age of seventeen a far better scholar than Nellie, who left every care to her step-sister, saying she was just suited to the kitchen work, and the tiresome old

books with which she kept her chamber littered. This chamber to which Nellie referred, was Maude's particular province. Here she reigned joint sovereign with Louis, who thus early evinced a degree of intellectuality wonderful in one so young, and who in some things excelled even Maude herself.

Drawing and painting seemed to be his ruling taste, and as Dr. Kennedy still cherished for his crippled boy a love almost idolatrous, he spared neither money nor pains to procure for him every thing necessary for his favorite pursuit. Almost the entire day did Louis pass in what he termed Maude's library, where, poring over books, or busy with his pencil, he whiled the hours away without a sigh for the green fields and shadowy woods, through which he could never hope to ramble. And Maude was very proud of her artist brother—proud of the beautiful boy whose face seemed not to be of earth, so calm, so angel-like was its expression. All the softer, gentler virtues of the mother, and all the intellectual qualities of the father were blended together in the child, who presented a combination of goodness, talent, beauty, and deformity, such as is seldom seen. For his sister Maude, Louis possessed a deep, undying love, which neither time nor misfortune could in any way abate. She was part and portion of himself—his life—his light—his all in all—and to his childlike imagination a purer, nobler being had never been created than his darling sister Maude. And well might Louis Kennedy love the self-sacrificing girl who devoted herself so wholly to him, and who well fulfilled her mother's charge. "Care for my little boy."

Nellie, too, was well beloved, but he soon grew weary of her company, for she seldom talked of any thing save

herself and the compliments which were given to her youthful beauty. And Nellie, at the age of eighteen, was beautiful, if that can be called beauty which is void of heart or soul or intellect. She was very small, and the profusion of golden curls which fell about her neck and shoulders, gave her the appearance of being younger than she really was. Her features were almost painfully regular, her complexion dazzlingly brilliant, while her large blue eyes had in them a dreamy, languid expression exceedingly attractive to those who looked for nothing beyond—no inner chamber where dwell the graces which make a woman what she ought to be. Louis' artist eye, undeveloped though it was, acknowledged the rare loveliness of Nellie's face. She would make a beautiful picture, he thought—but for the noble, the good, the pure, he turned to the dark eyed Maude, who was as wholly unlike her step-sister as it was possible for her to be. The one was a delicate blonde, the other a decided brunette, with hair and eyes of deepest black. Her complexion, too, was dark, but tinged with a beautiful red, which Nellie would gladly have transferred to her own paler cheek. It was around the mouth, however, the exquisitely shaped mouth, and white even teeth, that Maude's principal beauty lay, and the bright smile which lit up her features when at all animated in conversation would have made a plain face handsome. Some there were who gave her the preference, saying there was far more of beauty in her clear, beautiful eyes and sunny smile, than in the dollish face of Nellie, who treated such remarks with the utmost scorn. *She* knew that she was beautiful. She had known it all her life—for had she not been told so by her mirror, her father, her school-mates, her aunt Kelsey,

and more than all by J. C. De Vere, the elegant young man whom she had met in Rochester, where she had spent the winter preceding the summer of which we now are writing, and which was four and one half years after Mattie's death.

Greatly had the young lady murmured on her return against the dreary old house and lonely life at Laurel Hill, which did indeed present a striking contrast to the city gaieties in which she had been mingling. Even the cosy little chamber which the kind-hearted Maude had fitted up for her with her own means, was pronounced heathenish and old-fashioned, while Maude herself was constantly taunted with being *countryfied* and odd.

"I wish J. C. De Vere could see you now," she said one morning to her sister, who had donned her working dress, and with sleeves rolled up, and wide checked apron tied around her waist, was deep in the mysteries of bread making.

"I wish he could see her, too," said Louis, who had rolled his chair into the kitchen so that he could be with Maude. "He would say he never saw a handsomer color than the red upon her cheeks."

"Pshaw!" returned Nellie. "I guess he knows the difference between rose-tint and sun-burn. Why, he's the most fastidious man I ever saw. He can't endure the smell of cooking, and says he would never look twice at a lady whose hands were not as soft and white as—well, as mine," and she glanced admiringly at the little snowy fingers, which were beating a tune upon the window-sill.

"I want no better proof that he's a fool," muttered old Hannah, who looked upon Nellie as being what she really was, a vain, silly thing.

"A fool, Hannah," retorted Nellie; "I'd like to have Aunt Kelsey hear you say that. Why, he's the very best match in Rochester. All the girls are dying for him, but he don't care a straw for one of them. He's out of health now, and is coming here this summer with Aunt Kelsey, and then you'll see how perfectly refined he is. By the way, Maude, if I had as much money at my command as you have, I'd fix up the parlor a little. You know father won't, and that carpet, I'll venture to say, was in the ark. I almost dread to have J. C. come, he's so particular, but then he knows we are rich, and beside that, Aunt Kelsey has told him just how stingy father is, so I don't care so much. Did I tell you J. C. has a cousin *James*, who may possibly come too. I never saw him, but Aunt Kelsey says he's the queerest man that ever lived. He never was known to pay the slightest attention to a woman unless she was married or engaged. He has a most delightful house at Hampton, where he lives with his mother, but he'll never marry, unless it is some hired girl who knows how to work. Why, he was once heard to say he would sooner marry a good-natured Irish girl than a fashionable city lady, who knew nothing but to dress, and flirt, and play the piano—the wretch!"

"Oh! I know I should like him," exclaimed Louis, who had been an attentive listener.

"I dare say you would, and Maude, too," returned Nellie, adding, after a moment: "And I shouldn't wonder if Maude just suited him, particularly if he finds her up to her elbows in dough. So, Maude, it is for your interest to improve the old castle a little. Won't you buy a new carpet?" and she drew nearer to Maude, who made no direct reply.

The three hundred and fifty dollars interest money which she had received the year before, had but little of it been expended on herself, though it had purchased many a comfort for the household, for Maude was generous, and freely gave what was her own to give. The parlor carpet troubled even her, but she would not pledge herself to buy another, until she had first tried her powers of persuasion upon the doctor, who, as she expected, refused outright.

"He knew the carpet was faded," he said, "but 'twas hardly worn at all, and 'twas a maxim of his to make things last as long as possible."

It was in vain that Nellie, who was present, quoted Aunt Kelsey, and J. C. De Vere, the old doctor didn't care a straw for either, unless indeed, J. C. should some time take Nellie off his hands, and pay her bills, which were altogether too large for one of his *maxims*. That this would probably be the result of the young man's expected visit, had been strongly hinted by Mrs. Kelsey, and thus was he more willing to have him come. But on the subject of the carpet he was inexorable, and with tears of anger in her large blue eyes, Nellie gave up the contest, while Maude very quietly walked over to the store, and gave orders that a handsome three-ply carpet which she had heard her sister admire, should be sent home as soon as possible.

"You are a dear good girl after all, and I hope *James De Vere* will fall in love with you," was Nellie's exclamation as she saw a large roll deposited at their door, but not a stitch in the making of the carpet, did she volunteer to take. "She should prick her fingers, or callous her hand," she said, "and Mr. De Vere thought so much of a pretty hand."

"Nonsense!" said John, who was still a member of the family, "nonsense, Miss Nellie. I'd give a heap more for one of Miss Maude's little fingers, red and rough as they be, than I would for both them soft, sickish feeling hands of yours;" and John hastily disappeared from the room to escape the angry words, which he knew would follow his bold remark.

Nellie was not a favorite at home, and no one humored her as much as Maude, who, on this occasion, almost outdid herself in her endeavors to please the exacting girl, and make the house as presentable as possible to the fashionable Mrs. Kelsey, and the still more fashionable J. C. De Vere. The new carpet was nicely fitted to the floor, new curtains hung before the windows, the old sofa was re-covered, the piano was tuned, a hat-stand purchased for the hall, the spare chamber cleaned, and then very impatiently Nellie waited for the day when her guests were expected to arrive.

The time came at last, a clear June afternoon, and immediately after dinner, Nellie repaired to her chamber, so as to have ample time to try the effect of her different dresses, ere deciding upon any one. Maude, too, was a good deal excited, for one of her even temperament. She rather dreaded Mrs. Kelsey, whom she had seen but twice in her life, but for some reason, wholly inexplicable to herself, she felt a strange interest in the wonderful *J. C.*, of whom she had heard so much. Not that he would notice her in the least, but a man who could turn the heads of all the girls in Rochester, must be somewhat above the common order of mortals; and when at last her work was done, and she, too, went up to dress, it was with an

unusual degree of earnestness that she asked her sister what she should wear that would be becoming.

"Wear what you please, but don't bother me," answered Nellie, smoothing down the folds of her light blue muslin, which harmonized admirably with her clear complexion.

"Maude," called Louis, from the adjoining room, "wear white. You always look pretty in white."

"So does every black person!" answered Nellie, feeling provoked that she had not advised the wearing of some color *not* as becoming to Maude as she knew white to be.

Maude had the utmost confidence in Louis' taste, and when fifteen minutes later, she stood before the mirror, her short, glossy curls clustering about her head, a bright bloom on her cheek, and a brighter smile upon her lip, she thought it was the dress which made her look so well, for it had never entered her mind that she was handsome.

"Wear your coral ear-rings," said Louis, who had wheeled himself into the room, and was watching her with all a fond brother's pride.

The ear-rings were a decided improvement, and the jealous Nellie, when she saw how neat and tasteful was her sister's dress, began to cry, saying, "she herself looked a fright, that she'd nothing fit to wear, and if her father did not buy her something she'd run away."

This last was her usual threat when at all indignant, and as after giving vent to it she generally felt better, she soon dried her tears, saying, "she was glad anyway that she had blue eyes, for J. C. could not endure black ones."

"Maybe *James* can," was the quick rejoinder of Louis, who always defended Maude from Nellie's envious attacks.

By this time the clock was striking five. Half an hour more and they would be there, and going through the rooms below, Nellie looked to see if every thing was in order, then returning to her chamber above, she waited impatiently until the sound of wheels was heard in the distance. A cloud of dust was visible next, and soon a large traveling-carriage stopped at the gate laden with trunks and boxes, as if its occupants had come to spend the remainder of the summer. A straight, slender, dandified-looking young man sprang out, followed by another far different in style, though equally as fine looking. The lady next alighted, and scarcely were her feet upon the ground when she was caught around the neck by a little fairy figure in blue, which had tripped gracefully down the walk, seemingly unconscious, but really *very* conscious of every step she took, for the black-moustached young man, who touched his hat to her so politely, was particular about a woman's gait.

A little apart from the rest stood the stranger, casually eyeing the diminutive creature, of whose beauty and perfections he had heard so much, both from her partial aunt and his half-smitten cousin. There was a momentary thrill—a feeling such as one experiences in gazing upon a rare piece of sculpture—and then the heart of James De Vere resumed its accustomed beat, for *he* knew the inner chamber of the mind was empty, and henceforth Nellie's beauty would have no attraction for him. Very prettily she led the way to the house, and after ushering her guests into the parlor, ran up stairs to Maude, bidding her to order supper at once, and telling her as a piece of important news, which she did not already know, that "Aunt Kelsey, James, and J. C. had come."

CHAPTER VIII.

JAMES AND J. C.

JAMES and J. C. De Vere were cousins, and also cousins of Mrs. Kelsey's husband; and hence the intimacy between that lady and themselves, or rather between that lady and J. C., who was undeniably the favorite, partly because he was much like herself, and partly because of his name, which she thought so exclusive—so different from any one's else. His romantic young mother, who liked any thing savoring at all of *Waverly*, had inflicted upon him the cognomen of *Jedediah Cleishbotham*, and repenting of her act when too late, had dubbed him "J. C.," by which name he was now generally known. The ladies called him "a love of a man," and so he was, if a faultless form, a wicked black eye, a superb set of teeth, an unexceptionable moustache, a tiny foot, the finest of broadcloth, reported wealth, and perfect good humor constitute the ingredients which make up "a love of a man." Added to this, he really did possess a good share of common sense, and with the right kind of influence, would have made a far different man from what he was. Self-love was the bane of his life, and as he liked dearly to be flattered, so he in turn became a most consummate flatterer; always, however, adapting his remarks to the nature of the person with whom he was conversing. Thus to Nellie Kennedy, he said a thousand foolish things, just because he knew he gratified her vanity by doing so. Al

though possessing the reputation of a wealthy man, J. C. was far from being one, and his great object was to secure a wife, who, while not distasteful to him, still had money enough to cover many faults, and such an one he fancied Nelly Kennedy to be. From Mrs. Kelsey he had received the impression that the Doctor was very rich, and as Nellie was the only daughter, her fortune would necessarily be large. To be sure, he would rather she had been a little more sensible, but as she was not, he resolved to make the best of it, and although claiming to be something of an invalid in quest of health, it was really with the view of asking her to be his wife that he had come to Laurel Hill. He had first objected to his cousin accompanying him—not for fear of rivalry, but because he disliked what he might say of Nellie, for if there was a person in the world whose opinion he respected, and whose judgment he honored, it was his cousin James.

Wholly unlike J. C., was James, and yet he was quite as popular, for one word from him was more highly prized by scheming mothers and artful young girls, than the most complimentary speech that J. C. ever made. He meant what he said; and to the kindest, noblest of hearts, he added a fine commanding person, a finished education, and a quiet, gentlemanly manner, to say nothing of his unbounded wealth, and musical voice, whose low, deep tones had stirred the heart-strings of more than one fair maiden in her teens, but stirred them in vain, for James De Vere had never seen the woman he wished to call his wife; and now, at the age of twenty-six, he was looked upon as a confirmed old bachelor, whom almost any one would marry, but whom no one ever could. He had come to Laurel Hill because Mrs. Kelsey had asked him

so to do, and because he thought it would be pleasant to spend a few weeks in that part of the country.

Of Maude's existence he knew nothing, and when at last supper was announced, and he followed his cousin to the dining-room, he started in surprise, as his eye fell on the dark-eyed girl, who, with a heightened bloom upon her cheek, presided at the table with so much grace and dignity. Whether intentionally or not, we cannot say, but Nellie failed to introduce her step-sister, and as Mrs. Kelsey was too much absorbed in looking at her pretty niece, and in talking to her brother, to notice the omission, Maude's position would have been peculiarly embarrassing, but for the gentlemanly demeanor of James, who, always courteous, particularly to those whom he thought neglected, bowed politely, and made to her several remarks concerning the fineness of the day, and the delightful view which Laurel Hill commanded of the surrounding country. She was no menial, he knew, and looking in her bright, black eyes, he saw that she had far more mind than the dollish Nellie, who, as usual, was provoking J. C. to say all manner of foolish things.

As they were returning to the parlor, J. C. said to Nellie: "By the way, Nell, who is that young girl in white, and what is she doing here?"

"Why, that's Maude Remington, my step-sister," answered Nellie. "I'm sure you've heard me speak of her."

J. C. was sure he hadn't; but he did not contradict the little lady, whose manner plainly indicated that any attention paid by him to the said Maude, would be resented as an insult to herself. Just then, Mrs. Kelsey went upstairs, taking her niece with her; and, as Dr. Kennedy had a patient to visit, he, too, asked to be excused, and

the young men were left alone. The day was warm, and sauntering out beneath the trees, they sat down upon a rustic seat, which commanded a view of the dining-room, the doors and windows of which were open, disclosing to view all that was transpiring within.

"In the name of wonder, what's that?" exclaimed J. C., as he saw a curiously shaped chair wheeling itself, as it were, into the room.

"It must be Dr. Kennedy's crippled boy," answered James, as Louis skipped across the floor on crutches, and climbed into the chair which Maude carefully held for him.

Louis did not wish to eat with the strangers until somewhat acquainted, consequently he waited until they were gone, and then came to the table, where Maude stood by his side, carefully ministering to his wants, and assisting him into his chair when he was through. Then, pushing back her curls, and donning the check apron which Nellie so much abhorred, she removed the dishes herself, for old Hannah she knew was very tired, having done an unusual amount of work that day.

"I tell you what, Jim, I wouldn't wonder if that's the very one for you," said J. C., puffing leisurely at his cigar, and still keeping his eyes fixed upon the figure in white, as if to one of his fastidious taste there was nothing very revolting in seeing Maude Remington wash the supper dishes, even though her hands were brown and her arms a little red.

James did not answer immediately, and when he did, he said: "Do you remember a little girl we met in the cars between Springfield and Albany several years ago when we were returning from school? She was a funny

little black-eyed creature, and amused us very much with her remarks."

"I wouldn't wonder if I remembered her," returned J. C., "for didn't she say I looked as if I didn't mean for certain? I tell you what it is, Jim, I've thought of the speech more than a thousand times when I've been saying things I did not mean to foolish girls and their mammas. But what reminded you of her?"

"If I mistake not, that child and the young lady yonder are one and the same. You know she told us her name was Maude Remington, and that the naughty man behind us wasn't her father, and she didn't like him a bit, or something like that."

"And I honor her judgment both in his case and mine," interrupted J. C., continuing, after a moment: "The old fellow looks as that man did. I guess you are right. I mean to question *Cuffee* on the subject," and he beckoned to John, who was passing at no great distance.

"Sambo," said he, as the negro approached, "who is that young lady using the broom-handle so vigorously?" and he pointed to Maude, who was finishing her domestic duties, by brushing the crumbs from the carpet.

"If you please, sar, my name is *John*," answered the African, assuming a dignity of manner which even J. C. respected.

"Be it *John*, then," returned the young man, "but tell us how long has she lived here, and where did she come from?"

Nothing pleased John better than a chance to talk of Maude, and he replied: "She came here twelve years ago this very month with that little blue-eyed mother of hers, who is lyin' under them willers in the grave-yard. We

couldn't live without Miss Maude. She's all the sunshine thar is about the lonesome old place. Why, she does everything, from takin' care of her crippled half-brother to mendin' t'other ones gownd."

"And who is t'other one?" asked J. C., beginning to feel greatly interested in the negro's remarks.

"T'other one," said John, "is Miss Nellie, who wont work for fear of silin' her hands, which some fool of a city chap has made her b'lieve are so white and handsome," and a row of ivory was just visible, as, leaning against a tree, John watched the effect of his words upon "the fool of a city chap."

J. C. was exceedingly good natured, and tossing his cigar into the grass, he replied, "You don't mean *me*, of course; but tell us more of this Maude, who mops the floor and mends Nellie's dresses."

"She don't mop the floor," muttered John. "This nigger wouldn't let her do that—but she does mend Nellie's gownds, which I wouldn't do, if I's worth as much money as she is!"

If J. C. had been interested before, he was doubly interested now, and coming nearer to John, he said: "Money, my good fellow! is Maude an heiress?"

"She ain't nothin' else," returned John, who proceeded to speak of Janet and her generous gift, the amount of which he greatly exaggerated. "Nobody knows how much 'tis," said he; "but every body s'poses that will and all it must be thirty or forty thousand," and as the Doctor was just then seen riding into the yard, John walked away to attend to his master's horse.

"Those butter and cheese men do accumulate money fast," said J. C., more to himself than to his companion,

who laughingly replied, "It would be funny if you should make this Maude my cousin instead of Nellie. Let me see—cousin Nellie—cousin Maude. I like the sound of the latter the best, though I am inclined to think she is altogether too good for a mercenary dog like you."

"Pshaw!" returned J. C., pulling at the maple leaves which grew above his head, "I hope you don't think I'd marry a rude country girl for her money. No, give me *la charmant Nellie*, even though she cannot mend her dress, and you are welcome to cousin Maude, the milkman's heiress."

At that moment Mrs. Kelsey and Nellie appeared upon the stoop, and as Maude was no longer visible, the young gentlemen returned to the parlor, where J. C. asked Nellie to favor him with some music. Nellie liked to play, for it showed her white hands to advantage, and seating herself at the piano, she said: "I have learned a new song since I saw you, but Maude must sing the other part—maybe, though, I can get along without her."

This last was said because she did not care to have Maude in the parlor, and she had inadvertently spoken of her singing. The young men, however, were not as willing to excuse her, and Maude was accordingly sent for. She came readily, and performed her part without the least embarrassment, although she more than once half paused to listen to the rich, full tones of James's voice, for he was an unusually fine singer; Maude had never heard any thing like it before, and when the song was ended, the bright, sparkling eyes which she turned upon him told of her delight quite as eloquently as words could have done.

"You play, I am sure, Miss Remington," he said, as Nellie arose from the stool.

Maude glanced at her *red hands*, which J. C. would be sure to notice, then feeling ashamed to hesitate for a reason like this, she answered, "Yes, sometimes," and taking her seat, she played several pieces, keeping admirable time, and giving to the music a grace and finish which Nellie had often tried in vain to imitate.

"Mr. De Vere did not expect you to play all night," called out the envious girl, who, not satisfied with having enticed J. C. from the piano, wished James to join her also.

"She is merely playing at my request," said Mr. De Vere, "but if it is distasteful to Miss Kennedy we will of course desist," and bending low he said a few words of commendation to Maude, whose heart thrilled to the gentle tones of his voice just as many another maiden's had done before.

Mr. De Vere was exceedingly agreeable, and so Maude found him to be, for feeling intuitively that she was somewhat slighted by the overbearing Nellie, he devoted himself to her entirely, talking first of books, then of music, and lastly of his home, which, without any apparent boasting, he described as a most beautiful spot.

For a long time that night did Louis wait for his sister in his little bed, and when at last she came to give him her accustomed kiss, he pushed the thick curls from off her face and said, "I never saw you look so happy, Maude. Do you like that Mr. De Vere?"

"Which one," asked Maude. "There are two, you know."

"Yes, I know," returned Louis, "but I mean the one with the *voice*. Forgive me, Maude, but I sat ever so long at the head of the stairs, listening as he talked. He

is a good man, I am sure. Will you tell me how he looks?"

Maude could not well describe him. She only knew that he was taller than J. C., and as she thought much finer looking, with deep blue eyes, dark brown hair, and a mouth just fitted to his voice. Farther than this, she could not tell. "But you will see him in the morning," she said. "I have told him how gifted, how good you are, and to-morrow, he says he shall visit you in your den."

"Don't let the other one come," said Louis hastily, "for if he can't endure red hands, he'd laugh at my withered feet, and the bunch upon my back; but the other one wont, I know."

Maude knew so too, and somewhat impatiently she waited for the morrow, when she could introduce her brother to her friend. The morrow came, but, as was frequently the case, Louis was suffering from a severe pain in his back, which kept him confined to his room, so that Mr. DeVere neither saw him at all nor Maude as much as he wished to do. He had been greatly interested in her, and when at dinner he heard that she would not be down, he was conscious of a feeling of disappointment. She was not present at supper either, but after it was over she joined him in the parlor, and, together with J. C. and Nellie, accompanied him to the grave-yard, where, seating herself upon her mother's grave, she told him of that mother, and the desolation which crept into her heart when first she knew she was an orphan. From talking of her mother it was an easy matter to speak of her Vernon home, which she had never seen since she left it twelve years before, and then Mr. DeVere asked if she had

met two boys in the cars on her way to Albany. At first Maude could not recall them, and when at last she did so, her recollections were so vague that Mr. DeVere felt another pang of disappointment, though wherefore he could not tell, unless indeed, he thought there would be something pleasant in being remembered twelve long years by a girl like Maude Remington. He reminded her of her remark made to his cousin, and in speaking of him casually, alluded to his evident liking for Nellie, saying playfully, "Who knows, Miss Remington, but you may sometime be related to me—not my cousin exactly, though *Cousin Maude* sounds well. I like that name."

"I like it too," she said impulsively, "much better than Miss Remington, which seems so stiff."

"Then let me call you so. I have no girl cousin in the world," and leaning forward, he put back from her forehead one of her short, glossy curls, which had been displaced by the evening breeze.

This was a good deal for *him* to do. Never before had he touched a maiden's tresses, and he had no idea that it would make his *fingers tingle* as it did. Still, on the whole, he liked it, and half-wished the wind would blow those curls over the upturned face again, but it did not, and he was about to make some casual remark, when J. C., who was not far distant, called out, "Making love, I do believe!"

The speech was sudden and grated harshly on James' ear. Not because the idea of making love to Maude was utterly distasteful, but because he fancied she might be annoyed, and over his features there came a shadow, which Maude did not fail to observe.

"He does not wish to be teased about me," she thought, and around the warm spot which the name of "Cousin

Maude" had made within her heart, there crept a nameless chill—a fear that she had been degraded in his eyes. "I must go back to Louis," she said at last, and rising from her mother's grave, she returned to the house, accompanied by Mr. De Vere, who walked by her side in silence, wondering if she really cared for J. C.'s untimely joke.

"James De Vere did not understand the female heart, and wishing to relieve Maude from all embarrassment in her future intercourse with himself, he said to her as they reached the door: "My Cousin Maude must not mind what J. C. said, for she knows it is not so."

"Certainly not," was Maude's answer, as she ran up stairs, hardly knowing whether she wished it were, or were not so.

One thing, however, she knew. She liked to have him call her Cousin Maude; and when Louis asked what Mr. De Vere had said beneath the willows, she told him of her new name, and asked if he did not like it.

"Yes," he answered, "but I'd rather you were his sister, for then maybe he'd call me *brother*, even if I am a cripple. How I wish I could see him, and perhaps I shall to-morrow.

But on the morrow Louis was so much worse, that, in attending to him, Maude found but little time to spend with Mr. De Vere, who was to leave them that evening. When, however, the carriage which was to take him away, stood at the gate, she went down to bid him good-bye, and ask him to visit them again.

"I shall be happy to do so," he said; and then, as they were standing alone together, he continued: "Though I have not seen as much of you as I wished, I shall remember my visit at Laurel Hill with pleasure. In Hampton,

there are not many ladies for whose acquaintance I particularly care, and I have often wished that I had some female friend with whom I could correspond, and thus while away some of my leisure moments. Will my Cousin Maude answer me if I should sometime chance to write her, mere friendly, cousinly letters, of course?"

This last he said because he mistook the deep flush on Maude's cheek for an unwillingness to do any thing which looked at all like "making love."

"I will write," was all Maude had a chance to say ere Nellie joined them, accompanied by J. C., who had not yet terminated his visit at Laurel Hill, and as soon as his cousin left, he intended removing to the hotel, where he would be independent of Dr. Kennedy, and at the same time, devote himself to the daughter or step-daughter, just as he should feel inclined.

Some such idea might have intruded itself upon the mind of James, for when, at parting, he took his cousin's hand, he said, "You have my good wishes for your success with Nellie, but—"

"But not with t'other one, hey?" laughingly rejoined J. C., adding that James need have no fears, for there was not the slightest possibility of his addressing the *Milkman's Heiress*!

Alas for J. C.'s honesty! Even while he spoke, there was treachery in his saucy eyes, for the milkman's heiress, as he called her, was not to him an object of dislike, and when, after the carriage drove away, he saw the shadows on her face, and suspected their cause, he felt a strong desire that *his* departure might affect her in a similar manner. That evening, too, when Nellie sang to him his favorite song, he kept one ear turned toward the chamber

above, where, in a low, sweet voice, Maude Remington sang her suffering brother to sleep.

The next morning he removed to the hotel, saying he should probably remain there during the summer, as the air of Laurel Hill was highly conducive to his rather delicate health; but whether he meant the invigorating breeze, which blew from the surrounding hills, or an heir of a more substantial kind, time and our story will show.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MILKMAN'S HEIRESS.

MR. De Vere had been gone four weeks. Louis had entirely recovered from his illness, and had made the acquaintance of J. C., with whom he was on the best of terms. Almost every bright day did the young man draw the little covered wagon through the village, and away to some lovely spot, where the boy artist could indulge in his favorite occupation—that of sketching the familiar objects around him. At first Nellie accompanied them in these excursions; but when one day her aunt, who still remained at Laurel Hill, pointed out to her a patch of sun burn and a dozen freckles—the result of her out door exercise, she declared her intention of remaining at home thereafter—a resolution not altogether unpleasant to J. C., as by this means Maude was more frequently his companion.

If our readers suppose that to a man of J. C.'s nature there was any thing particularly agreeable in thus devoting himself to a cripple boy, they are mistaken, for Louis Kennedy might have remained in doors for ever, had it not been for the sunny smile and look of gratitude which Maude Remington always gave to J. C. De Vere, when he came for or returned with her darling brother. Insensibly the domestic virtues and quiet ways of the black haired Maude were winning a strong hold upon J. C.'s affections, and still he had never seriously thought of

making her his wife. He only knew that he liked her, that he felt very comfortable where she was, and very uncomfortable where she was not—that the sound of her voice singing in the choir was the only music he heard on the Sabbath day, and though Nellie, in her character of soprano, oftentimes warbled like a bird, filling the old church with melody, he did not heed it, so intent was he in listening to the deeper, richer notes, of her who sang the alto, and whose fingers swept the organ keys with so much grace and beauty.

And Maude! within her bosom was there no interest awakened for one who thought so much of her? Yes, but it was an interest of a different nature from his. She liked him, because he was so much more polite to her than she had expected him to be, and more than all, she liked him for his kindness to her brother, never dreaming that for her sake alone those kindly acts were done. Of James De Vere she often thought, repeating sometimes to herself the name of Cousin Maude, which had sounded so sweetly to her ear, when he had spoken it. His promise she remembered, too, and as often as the mail came in, bringing her no letter, she sighed involuntarily to think she was forgotten. Not forgotten, Maude, no, not forgotten, and when one afternoon, five weeks after James's departure, J. C., stood at her side, he had good reason for turning his eyes away from her truthful glance, for he knew of a secret wrong done to her that day. There had come to him that morning, a letter from James, containing a note for Maude, and the request that he would hand it to her.

"I should have written to her sooner," James wrote, "but mother's illness and an unusual amount of business

prevented me from doing so. 'Better late than never,' is, however, a good motto at times, and I entrust the letter to you, because I would save her from any gossip which an open correspondence with me might create."

For James De Vere to write to a young girl was an unheard-of circumstance, and the sight of that note aroused in J. C.'s bosom a feeling of jealousy lest the prize he now knew he coveted should be taken from him. No one but himself should write to Maude Remington, for she was *his*, or rather she should be his. The contents of that note might be of the most ordinary kind, but for some reason undefinable to himself he would rather she should not see it yet, and though it cost him a struggle to deal thus falsely with both, he resolved to keep it from her until she had promised to be his wife. He never dreamed it possible that she could tell him no; he had been so flattered and admired by the city belles, and the only point which troubled him was what his fashionable friends would say when in place of the Nellie, whose name had been so long associated with his, he brought to them a Maude fresh from the rural districts, with naught in her disposition save goodness, purity, and truth. They would be surprised, he knew, but she was worth a thousand of them all, and then, with a glow of pride, he thought how his tender love and care would shield her from all unkind remarks, and how he would make himself worthy of such a treasure.

This was the nobler, better part of J. C.'s nature, but anon a more sordid feeling crept in, and he blushed to find himself wondering how large her fortune really was! No one knew, save the lawyers and the trustee to whose care it had been committed, and since he had become in-

terested in her, he dared not question them, lest they should accuse him of mercenary motives. Was it as large as Nellie's? He wished he knew, while, at the same time, he declared to himself that it should make no difference. The heart which had withstood so many charms was really interested at last, and though he knew both Mrs. Kelsey and her niece would array themselves against him, he was prepared to withstand the indignation of the one and the opposition of the other.

So perfectly secure was Nellie in J. C.'s admiration for herself, that she failed to see his growing preference for Maude, whom she frequently ridiculed in his presence, just because she thought he would laugh at it, and think her witty. But in this she was mistaken, for her ridicule raised Maude higher in his estimation, and he was glad when at last an opportunity occurred for him to declare his intentions.

For a week or more, Nellie, and a few of the young people of the village, had been planning a pic-nic to the lake and the day was finally decided upon. Nellie did not ask J. C. if he were going; she expected it as a matter of course, just as she expected that Maude would stay at home to look after Louis and the house. But J. C. had his own opinion of the matter, and when the morning came he found it very convenient to be suffering from a severe headache, which would not permit him to leave his bed, much less to join the pleasure-party.

"Give my compliments to Miss Kennedy," he said to the young man who came to his door, "and tell her I cannot possibly go this morning, but will perhaps come down this afternoon."

"Mr. DeVere not going! I can't believe it!" and the

angry tears glittered in Nellie's blue eyes, when she heard the message he had sent her.

"*Not going!*" exclaimed Mrs. Kelsey, while even Maude sympathized in the general sorrow, for her hands had prepared the repast, and she had taken especial pains with the pies which Mr. DeVere liked the best, and which, notwithstanding his dislike to *kitchen odors*, he had seen her make, standing at her elbow, and complimenting her skill.

Nellie was in favor of deferring the ride, but others of the party, who did not care so much for Mr. DeVere's society, objected, and poutingly tying on her flat, the young lady took her seat beside her aunt, who was scarcely less chagrined than herself at their disappointment.

Meanwhile, from behind his paper curtains, J. C. looked after the party as they rode away, feeling somewhat relieved when the blue ribbons of Nellie's flat disappeared from view. For appearance's sake, he felt obliged to keep his room for an hour or more, but at the end of that time he ventured to feel better, and dressing himself with unusual care, he started for Dr. Kennedy's, walking very slowly, as became one suffering from a nervous headache, as he was supposed to be. Maude had finished her domestic duties, and in tasteful gingham morning-gown, with the whitest of linen collars upon her neck, she sat reading alone at the foot of the garden, beneath a tall cherry tree, where John had built her a rough seat of boards. This was her favorite resort, and here J. C. found her, so intent upon her book as not to observe his approach until he stood before her. She seemed surprised to see him, and made anxious inquiries concerning his headache, which he told her was much better.

"And even if it were not," said he, seating himself at her feet; "Even if it were not, the sight of you, looking so bright, so fresh and so neat, would dissipate it entirely," and his eyes, from which the saucy, wicked look was for the moment gone, rested admiringly upon her face.

His manner was even more pointed than his words, and coloring crimson, Maude replied, "You are disposed to be complimentary, Mr. De Vere."

"I am disposed for once to tell the truth," he answered. "All my life long I have acted a part, saying and doing a thousand foolish things I did not mean, just because I thought it would please the senseless bubbles with whom I have been associated. But you, Maude Remington, have brought me to my senses, and determined me to be a *man* instead of a *fool*. Will you help me, Maude, in this resolution? and seizing both her hands, he poured into her astonished ear his declaration of love, speaking so rapidly and so vehemently as almost to take her breath away, for she had never expected a scene like this.

She had looked upon him as one who would undoubtedly be her sister's husband, and the uniform kindness with which he had treated her, she attributed to his exceeding good nature; but to be loved by him; by J. C. De Vere, who had been sought after by the fairest ladies in the land, she could not believe it possible, and with mingled feelings of pleasure, pain and gratified vanity, she burst into tears.

Very gently J. C. wiped her tears away, and sitting down beside her, he said, "The first time I ever saw you, Maude, you told me 'I did not look as if I meant for certain,' and you were right, for all my life has been a humbug; but I mean 'for certain' now. I love you, Maude,

love you for the very virtues which I have so often affected to despise, and you must make me what J. C. De Vere ought to be. Will you, Maude? Will you be my wife?"

To say Maude was not gratified that this man of fashion should prefer her to all the world, would be an untruth, but she could not then say "Yes," for another, and a more melodious voice was still ringing in her ear, and she saw in fancy a taller, nobler form than that of him who was pressing her to answer.

"Not yet, Mr. De Vere," she said. "Not yet. I must have time to think. It has come upon me so suddenly, so unexpectedly, for I have always thought of you as Nellie's future husband, and my manners are so different from what you profess to admire."

"'Twas only profession, Maude," he said, and then, still holding her closely to him, he frankly and ingenuously gave her a truthful history of his life up to the time of his first acquaintance with Nellie, of whom he spoke kindly, saying she pleased him better than most of his city friends, and as he began really to want a wife, he had followed her to Laurel Hill, fully intending to offer her the heart which, ere he was aware of it, was given to another. "And now, I cannot live without you," he said. "You must be mine. Wont you, Maude? I *will* be a good husband. I will take lessons of Cousin James, who is called a pattern man."

The mention of that name was unfortunate, and rising to her feet Maude replied: "I *cannot* answer you now, Mr. De Vere. I should say *No*, if I did, I am sure, and I would rather think of it awhile."

He knew by her voice that she was in earnest, and kiss-

ing her hand he walked rapidly away, his love increasing in intensity with each step he took. He had not expected any thing like hesitancy. Every one else had met his advances at least half-way, and Maude's indecision made him feel more ardent than he otherwise might have been.

"What if she should refuse me?" he said, as he paced up and down his room, working himself up to such a pitch of feeling, that when that afternoon Nellie on the Lake shore was waiting impatiently his coming, he on his pillow was really suffering all the pangs of a racking headache, brought on by strong nervous excitement. "What if she should say, No?" he kept repeating to himself, and at last, maddened by the thought, he arose, and dashing off a wild rambling letter, was about sending it by a servant, when he received a note from her, for an explanation of which, we will go back an hour or so in our story.

In a state of great perplexity Maude returned to the house, and seeking out her brother, the only person to whom she could go for counsel, she told him of the offer she had received, and asked him what he thought. In most respects Louis was far older than his years, and he entered at once into the feelings of his sister.

"J. C. De Vere propose to you!" he exclaimed. "What will Nellie say?"

"If I refuse, she never need to know of it," answered Maude, and Louis continued: "They say he is a great catch, and wouldn't it be nice to get him away from every body else. But what of the other De Vere? Don't you like him the best?"

Maude's heart beat rapidly, and the color on her cheek deepened to a brighter hue, as she replied, "What made you think of him?"

"I don't know," was Louis' answer, "only when he was here, I fancied you were pleased with him, and that he would suit you better than J. C."

"But he don't like me," said Maude. "He don't like any woman well enough to make her his wife," and she sighed deeply as she thought of his broken promise, and the letter looked for so long.

"Maude," said Louis suddenly, "men like J. C. De Vere sometimes marry for money, and maybe he thinks your fortune larger than it is. Most every body does."

That Maude was more interested in J. C. De Vere than she supposed, was proved by the earnestness with which she defended him from all mercenary motives.

"He knows Nellie's fortune is much larger than my own," she said, "and by preferring me to her, he shows that money is not his motive."

Still Louis's suggestion troubled her, and by way of testing the matter, she sat down at once and wrote him a note, telling him frankly how much she had in her own name, and how much in expectancy. This note she sent to him by John, who, naturally quick-witted, read a portion of the truth in her tell-tale face, and giving a loud whistle in token of his approbation, he exclaimed, "This nigger'll never quit larfin' if you gets him after all Miss Nellie's nonsense, and I hopes you will, for he's a heap better chap than I s'posed, though I b'lieve I like t'other one the best!"

Poor Maude! *That other one* seemed destined to be continually thrust upon her, but resolving to banish him from her mind, as one who had long since ceased to think of her, she waited impatiently for a reply to her letter.

Very hastily J. C. tore it open, hoping, believing that it contained the much desired answer. "I knew she could not hold out against me—no one ever did," he said; but when he read the few brief lines, he dashed it to the floor with an impatient "pshaw!" feeling a good deal disappointed that she had not said *Yes*, and a *very little* disappointed that the figures were not larger!

"Five thousand dollars the twentieth of next June, and five thousand more when that old Janet dies; ten thousand in all. Quite a handsome property if Maude could have it at once. I wonder if she's healthy, this Mrs. Hopkins," soliloquized J. C., until at last, a new idea entered his mind, and striking his fist upon the table, he exclaimed, "Of course she will. Such people always do, and that knocks the will in head!" and J. C. De Vere frowned wrathfully upon the little imaginary Hopkinses who were to share the milkman's fortune with Maude.

Just then a girlish figure was seen beneath the trees in Dr. Kennedy's yard, and glancing at the white cape bonnet, J. C. knew that it was *Maude*, the sight of whom drove young *Hopkins* and the *will* effectually from his mind. "He would marry her, any way," he said, "five thousand dollars was enough;" and donning his hat, he started at once for the doctor's. Maude had returned to the house, and was sitting with her brother, when the young man was announced. Wholly unmindful of Louis's presence, he began at once by asking "if she esteemed him so lightly as to believe that *money* could make any difference with him."

"It influences some men," answered Maude, "and though you may like me"—

"Like you, Maude Remington," he exclaimed, "Like

is a feeble word. I worship you, I love the very air you breathe, and you must be mine. Will you, Maude?"

J. C. had never before been so much in earnest, for never before had he met with the least indecision, and he continued pleading his cause so vehemently, that Louis, who was wholly unprepared for so stormy a wooing, stopped his ears, and whispered to his sister, "Tell him *Yes*, before he drives me crazy!"

But Maude felt that she must have time for sober, serious reflection; J. C. was not indifferent to her, and the thought was very soothing that she who had never aspired to the honor had been chosen from all others to be his wife. He was handsome, agreeable, kind-hearted, and, as she believed, sincere in his love for her. And still there was something lacking. She could not well tell what, unless, indeed, she would have him more like *James De Vere*.

"Will you answer me?" J. C. said, after there had been a moment's silence, and in his deep black eyes there was a truthful, earnest look, wholly unlike the wicked, treacherous expression usually hidden there.

"Wait awhile," answered Maude, coming to his side and laying her hand upon his shoulder. "Wait a few days, and I most know I shall tell you *Yes*. I like you, Mr. De Vere, and if I hesitate, it is because—because—I really don't know what, but something keeps telling me that our engagement may be broken, and if so, it had better not be made."

There was another storm of words, and then, as Maude still seemed firm in her resolution to do nothing hastily, J. C. took his leave. As the door closed after him, Louis heaved a deep sigh of relief, and, turning to his sister,

said: "I never heard any thing like it; I wonder if James would act like that!"

"Louis," said Maude, but ere Louis could reply, she had changed her mind, and determined not to tell him that James De Vere alone stood between her and the decision J. C. pleaded for so earnestly. So she said: "Shall I marry J. C. De Vere?"

"Certainly, if you love him," answered Louis. "He will take you to Rochester away from this lonesome house. I shall live with you more than half the time, and"—

Here Louis was interrupted by the sound of wheels. Mrs. Kelsey and Nellie had returned from the Lake, and bidding her brother say nothing of what he had heard, Maude went down to meet them. Nellie was in the worst of humors. "Her head was aching horridly. She had spent an awful day—and J. C. was wise in staying at home."

"How is he?" she asked, "though of course you have not seen him."

Maude was about to speak, when Hannah, delighted with a chance to disturb Nellie, answered for her. "It's my opinion that headache was all a sham, for you hadn't been gone an hour, afore he was over here in the garden with Maude, where he staid ever so long. Then he came agen this afternoon, and hasn't but jest gone."

Nellie had not sufficient discernment to read the truth of this assertion in Maude's crimson cheeks, but Mrs. Kelsey had, and very sarcastically she said: "Miss Remington, I think, might be better employed than in trying to supplant her sister."

"I have not tried to supplant her, madam," answered Maude, her look of embarrassment giving way to one of indignation at the unjust accusation.

"May I ask, then, if Mr. De Vere has visited you twice to-day, and if so, what was the object of those visits?" continued Mrs. Kelsey, who suddenly remembered several little incidents which had heretofore passed unheeded, and which, now that she recalled them to mind, proved that J. C. De Vere was interested in Maude.

"Mr. De Vere can answer for himself, and I refer you to him," was Maude's reply, as she walked away.

Nellie began to cry. "Maude had done something," she knew, "and it wouldn't be a bit improper for a woman as old as aunt Kelsey to go over and see how Mr. De Vere was, particularly as by this means she might find out why he had been there so long with Maude."

Mrs. Kelsey was favorably impressed with this idea, and after changing her dusty dress and drinking a cup of tea, she started for the hotel. J. C. was sitting near the window, watching anxiously for a glimpse of Maude, when his visitor was announced. Seating herself directly opposite him, Mrs. Kelsey inquired after his headache, and then asked how he had passed the day.

"Oh, in lounging, generally, he answered, while she continued, "Hannah says you spent the morning there, and also a part of the afternoon. Was my brother at home?"

"He was not. I went to see Maude," J. C. replied somewhat stiffly, for he began to see the drift of her remarks.

Mrs. Kelsey hesitated a moment, and then proceeded to say that "J. C. ought not to pay Miss Remington much attention, as she was very susceptible and might fancy him in earnest."

"And suppose she does?" said J. C., determining to brave the worst. "Suppose she does?"

Mrs. Kelsey was very uncomfortable, and coughing a little she replied, "It is wrong to raise hopes which cannot be realized, for of course you have never entertained a serious thought of a low country girl like Maude Remington."

There had been a time when a remark like this from the fashionable Mrs. Kelsey would have banished any girl from J. C.'s mind, for he was rather dependent on the opinion of others, but it made no difference now, and, warming up in Maude's defence, he replied, "I assure you, madam, I have entertained serious thoughts toward Miss Remington, and have this day asked her to be my wife."

"Your wife!" almost screamed the high-bred Mrs. Kelsey. "What will your city friends—what will Nellie say?"

"Confound them all, I don't care what they say," and J. C. drove his knife-blade into the pine table, while he gave his reasons for having chosen Maude in preference to Nellie, or any one else he had ever seen. "There's something to her," said he, "and with her for my wife, I shall make a decent man. What would Nellie and I do together—when neither of us know any thing—about business, I mean," he added, while Mrs. Kelsey rejoined, "I always intended that you would live with me, and I had that handsome suite of rooms arranged expressly for Nellie and her future husband. I have no children, and my niece will inherit my property."

This, under some circumstances would have strongly tempted the young man, nay, it might perchance have tempted him then, had not the deep tones of the organ at that moment have reached his ear. It was the night when

Maude usually rehearsed for the coming Sabbath, and soon after her interview with her sister, she had gone to the church where she sought to soothe her ruffled spirits, by playing a most plaintive air. The music was singularly soft and sweet, and the heart of J. C. De Vere trembled to the sound, for he knew it was Maude who played—Maude, who outweighed the tempting bait which Mrs. Kelsey offered, and with a magnanimity quite astonishing to himself, he answered, "*Poverty* with Maude, rather than riches with another!"

"Be it so, then," was Mrs. Kelsey's curt reply, "but when in the city you blush at your bride's awkwardness, don't expect me to lend a helping hand, for Maude Remington cannot by me be recognized as an equal," and the proud lady swept from the room, wearing a deeply injured look, as if she herself had been refused, instead of her niece.

"Let me off easier than I supposed," muttered J. C., as he watched her cross the street, and enter Dr. Kennedy's gate. "It will be mighty mean, though, if she does array herself against my wife, for Madam Kelsey is quoted everywhere, and even Mrs. Lane, who lives just opposite, dare not open her parlor blinds until assured by ocular demonstration that Mrs. Kelsey's are open too. Oh, fashion, fashion, what fools you make of your votaries! I am glad that I for one dare break your chain, and marry whom I please," and feeling more amiably disposed toward J. C. De Vere, than he had felt for many a day, the young man started for the church, where to his great joy he found Maude alone.

She was not surprised to see him, nay, she was half expecting him, and the flush which deepened on her

cheek as he came to her side, showed that his presence was not unwelcome. Human nature is the same everywhere, and though Maude was perhaps as free from its weaknesses as almost any one, the fact that her lover was so greatly coveted by others, increased rather than diminished her regard for him, and when he told her what had passed between himself and Mrs. Kelsey, and urged her to give him a right to defend her against that haughty woman's attacks by engaging herself to him at once, she was more willing to tell him *Yes*, than she had been in the morning. Thoughts of James De Vere did not trouble her now—he had ceased to remember her ere this—had never been more interested in her than in any ordinary acquaintance, and so, though she knew she could be happier with him than with the one who with his arm around her waist, was pleading for her love, she yielded at last, and in that dim old church, with the summer moonlight stealing up the dusky aisles, she promised to be the wife of J. C. De Vere on her eighteenth birthday.

Very pleasant now it seemed sitting there alone with him in the silent church. Very pleasant walking with him down the quiet street, and when her chamber was reached, and Louis, to whom she told her story, whispered in her ear, "I am glad that is so," she thought it very nice to be engaged, and was conscious of a happier, more independent feeling than she had ever known before. It seemed so strange that she, an unpretending country girl, had won the heart that many a city maiden had tried in vain to win, and then with a pang she thought of Nellie, wondering what excuse she could render her for having stolen J. C. away.

"But he will stand between us," she said, "he will

shield me from her anger," and grateful for so potent a protector, she fell asleep, dreaming alas, not of J. C., but of him who called her *Cousin Maude*, and whose cousin she really was to be.

J. C. De Vere, too, had dreams of a dark-eyed girl, who, in the shadowy church, with the music she had made still vibrating on the ear, had promised to be his. Dreams, too, he had of a giddy throng who scoffed at the dark-eyed girl, calling her by the name which he himself had given her. It was not meet, they said, that he should wed the "Milkman's Heiress," but with a nobleness of soul unusual in him, he paid no heed to their remarks, and folded the closer to his heart the bride which he had chosen.

Alas! that dreams so often prove untrue.

CHAPTER X.

THE ENGAGEMENT, REAL AND PROSPECTIVE.

To her niece Mrs. Kelsey had communicated the result of her interview with J. C., and that young lady had fallen into a violent passion, which merged itself at last into a flood of tears, and ended finally in strong hysterics. While in this latter condition, Mrs. Kelsey deemed it necessary to summon her brother, to whom she narrated the circumstances of Nellie's illness. To say that the doctor was angry would but feebly express the nature of his feelings. He had fully expected that Nellie would be taken off his hands, and he had latterly a very good reason for wishing that it might be so.

Grown-up daughters, he knew, were apt to look askance at step-mothers, and if he should wish to bring another there, he would rather that Nellie should be out of the way. So he railed at the innocent Maude, and after exhausting all the maxims which would at all apply to that occasion, he suggested sending for Mr. De Vere, and demanding an explanation. But this Mrs. Kelsey would not suffer.

"It will do no good," she said, "and may make the matter worse by hastening the marriage. I shall return home to-morrow, and if you do not object shall take your daughter with me, to stay at least six months, as she needs a change of scene. I can, if necessary, intimate to my friends that she has refused J. C., who, in a fit of pique,

has offered himself to Maude, and that will save Nellie from all embarrassment. He will soon tire of his new choice, and then"—

"I won't have him if he does," gasped Nellie, interrupting her aunt—"I won't have any body who has first proposed to Maude. I wish she'd never come here, and if pa hadn't brought that woman"—

"Helen!" and the doctor's voice was very stern, for time had not erased from his heart all love for the blue-eyed Matty, the gentle mother of the offending Maude, and more than all, the mother of his boy—"Helen, *that woman was my wife*, and you must not speak disrespectfully of her."

Nellie answered by a fresh burst of tears, for her own conscience smote her for having spoken thus lightly of one who had ever been kind to her.

After a moment, Mrs. Kelsey resumed the conversation by suggesting that, as the matter could not now be helped, they had better say nothing, but go off on the morrow as quietly as possible, leaving J. C. to awake from his hallucination, which she was sure he would do soon, and follow them to the city. This arrangement seemed wholly satisfactory to all parties, and though Nellie declared she'd never again speak to *Jed* De Vere, she dried her tears, and retiring to rest, slept quite as soundly as she had ever done in her life.

The next morning when Maude as usual went down to superintend the breakfast, she was surprised to hear from Hannah that Mrs. Kelsey was going that day to Rochester, and that Nellie was to accompany her.

"Nobody can 'cuse me," said Hannah, "of not 'fillin' scriptur' oncet, whar it says 'them as has ears to hear, let

'em hear,' for I did hear 'em a talkin' last night of you and Mr. De Vere, and I tell you they're ravin' mad to think you'd coted him; but I'm glad on't. You deserves him if anybody. I suppose that t'other chap ain't none of your marryin' sort," and unconscious of the twinge her last words had inflicted Hannah carried the coffee-urn to the dining-room, followed by Maude, who was greeted with dark faces and frowning looks.

Scarcely a word was spoken during breakfast, and when after it was over, Maude offered to assist Nellie in packing her trunks, the latter answered decisively, "You've done enough, I think."

A few moments afterward, J. C.'s voice was heard upon the stairs. He had come over to see the "lioness and her cub," as he styled Mrs. Kelsey and her niece, whose coolness was amply atoned for by the bright, joyous glance of Maude, to whom he whispered softly, "Won't we have glorious times when they are gone!"

Their projected departure pleased him greatly, and he was so very polite and attentive that Nellie relented a little, and asked how long he intended remaining at Laurel Hill, while even Mrs. Kelsey gave him her hand at parting, and said, "Whenever you recover from your unaccountable fancy, I shall be glad to see you."

"You'll wait some time, if you wait for that," muttered J. C., as he returned to the house in quest of Maude, with whom he had a long and most delightful interview, for old Hannah, in unusually good spirits, expressed her willingness to see to every thing, saying to her young mistress, "You go along now, and court a spell. I reckon I hain't done forgot how I and Crockett sot on the fence in old Virginny and heard the bobolinks a singin'."

Old Hannah was waxing sentimental, and with a heightened bloom upon her cheeks, Maude left her to her memories of *Crockett* and the *bobolinks*, while she went back to her lover. J. C. was well skilled in the little, delicate acts which tend to win and keep a woman's heart, and in listening to his protestations of love, Maude forgot all else, and abandoned herself to the belief that she was perfectly happy. Only once did her pulses quicken as they would not have done had her chosen husband been all that she could wish, and that was when he said to her, "I wrote to *James* last night, telling him of my engagement. He will congratulate me, I know, for he was greatly pleased with you."

Much did Maude wonder what James would say, and it was not long ere her curiosity was gratified; for scarcely four days were passed, when J. C. brought to her an unsealed note, directed to "Cousin Maude."

"I have heard from Jim," he said, "and he is the best fellow in the world. Hear what he says of you," and from his own letter he read, "I do congratulate you upon your choice. Maude Remington is a noble creature—so beautiful, so refined, and withal so pure and good. Cherish her, my cousin, as she ought to be cherished, and bring her sometime to my home, which will never boast so fair a mistress."

"I'm so glad he's pleased," said J. C. "I would rather have his approval than that of the whole world. But what! Crying, I do believe!" and turning Maude's face to the light, he continued, "Yes, there are tears on your eyelashes. What is the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing," answered Maude, "only I am so glad your relatives like me."

J. C. was easily deceived, so was Maude—and mutually believing that nothing was the matter, J. C. drummed on the piano, while Maude tore open the note which James had written to her. It seemed so strange to think *he* wrote it, and Maude trembled violently, while the little red spots came out all over her neck and face, as she glanced at the words, "*My dear Cousin Maude.*"

It was a kind, affectionate note, and told how the writer would welcome and love her as his cousin, while, at the same time, it chided her for not having answered the letter sent some weeks before. "Perhaps you did not deem it worthy of an answer," he wrote, "but I was sadly disappointed in receiving none, and now that you are really to be my cousin, I shall expect you to do better, and treat me as if I had an existence. J. C. must not monopolize you wholly, for I shall claim a share of you for myself."

Poor, poor Maude! She did not feel the summer air upon her brow—did not hear the discordant notes which J. C. made upon the piano, for her whole soul was centered on the words, "sadly disappointed," "love you as my cousin," and "claim a share of you for myself."

Only for a moment though, and then recovering her composure, she said aloud, "What does he mean? I never received a note."

"I know it, I know it," hastily spoke J. C., and coming to her side, he handed her the soiled missive saying, "It came a long time ago, and was mislaid among my papers, until this letter recalled it to my mind. There is nothing in it of any consequence, I dare say, and had it not been sealed, I might, perhaps, have read it, for as the doctor says, 'it's a maxim of mine, that a *wife* should have no secrets from her husband,' Hey, Maude?" and he caressed

her burning cheek, as she read the note, which, had it been earlier received, might have changed her whole after life.

And still it was not one half as affectionate in its tone as was the last, for it began with, "Cousin Maude" and ended with "Yours respectfully," but she knew he had been true to his promise, and without a suspicion that J. C., had deceived her, she placed the letters in her pocket, to be read again when she was alone, and could measure every word and sentiment.

That afternoon when she went to her chamber to make some changes in her dress, she found herself standing before the mirror much longer than usual, examining minutely the face which James De Vere had called beautiful.

"He thought so, or he would not have said it, but it is false," she whispered, "even J. C., never called me handsome;" and taking out the note that day received, she read it again, wondering why the name "Cousin Maude" did not sound as pleasantly as when it first was breathed into her ear.

That night as she sat with Louis in her room, she showed the letters to him, at the same time explaining the reason why one of them was not received before.

"Oh, I am so glad," said Louis, as he finished reading them, "for now I know that James De Vere don't like you."

"Don't like me, Louis!" and in Maude's voice there was a world of sadness.

"I mean," returned Louis, "that he don't love you for any thing but a cousin. I like J. C., very, very much, and I am glad you are to be his wife; but I've sometimes

thought that if you had waited, the other one would have spoken, for I was almost sure he loved you, but he don't I know; he couldn't be so pleased with your engagement, nor write you so affectionately if he really cared.

Maude hardly knew whether she were pleased or not with Louis' reasoning. It was true though, she said, and inasmuch as James did not care for her, and she did not care for James, she was very glad she was engaged to *J. C.*! And with reassured confidence in herself, she sat down and wrote an answer to that note, a frank impulsive, Maude like answer, which, nevertheless, would convey to James De Vere no idea how large a share of that young girl's thoughts were given to himself.

The next day there came to Maude a letter bearing the Canada post mark, together with the unmistakable handwriting of Janet Hopkins. Maude had not heard of her for some time, and very eagerly she read the letter, laughing immoderately, and giving vent to sudden exclamations of astonishment at its surprising intelligence. Janet was a *mother!*—"a livin' mother to a child born out of due season," so the delighted creature wrote, "and what was better than all, it was a *girl*, and the Sunday before was baptised as Maude Matilda Remington Blodgett Hopkins, there being no reason," she said, "why she shouldn't give her child as many names as the Queen of England hitched on to hers, beside that it was not at all likely that she would ever have another, and so she had improved this opportunity, and named her daughter in honor of Maude, Matty, Harry and her first husband Joel. But," she wrote, "I don't know what you'll say when I tell you that my old man and some others have made me believe that seein' I've an heir of my own flesh and blood, I ought

to change that will of mine, so I've made another, and if *Maude Matilda* dies you'll have it yet. T'other five thousand is yours, any way, and if I didn't love the little *wudget* as I do, I wouldn't have changed my will; but natur is natur."

Scarcely had Maude finished reading this letter when J. C. came in, and she handed it to him. He did not seem surprised, for he had always regarded the will as a doubtful matter; but in reality he was a little chagrined, for five thousand was only half as much as ten. Still his love for Maude was, as yet, stronger than his love for money, and he only laughed heartily at the string of names which Janet had given to her offspring, saying, "it was a pity it hadn't been a boy, so she could have called him *Jedediah Cleishbotham*."

"He does not care for my money," Maude thought, and her heart went out toward him more lovingly than it had ever done before, and her dark eyes filled with tears, when he told her, as he ere long did, that he must leave the next day and return to Rochester.

"The little property left me by my mother needs attention, so my agent writes me," he said, "and now the will has gone up, and we are poorer than we were before by five thousand dollars, it is necessary that I should bestir myself, you know."

Maude could not tell why it was, that his words affected her unpleasantly, for she knew he was not rich, and she felt that she should respect him more if he really did bestir himself, but still she did not like his manner when speaking of the will, and her heart was heavy all the day. He, on the contrary, was in unusually good spirits. He was not tired of Maude, but he was tired of the monoto-

nous life at Laurel Hill, and when his agent's summons came it found him ready to go. That for which he had visited Laurel Hill, had in reality been accomplished. He had secured a wife, not Nellie, but Maude, and determining to do every thing honorably, he, on the morning of his departure, went to the doctor, to whom he talked of Maude, expressing his wish to marry her.

Very coldly the doctor answered that "Maude could marry whom she pleased. It was a maxim of his never to interfere with matches," and then, as if the subject were suggestive, he questioned the young man to know if in his travels he had ever met the lady Maude Glendower. J. C. had met her once at Saratoga, at Newport once, and twice at the White Mountains.

"She was a splendid creature," he said, and he asked if the doctor knew her.

"I saw her as a child of seventeen, and again as a woman of twenty-five. She is *forty* now," was the doctor's answer, as he walked away, wondering if the Maude Glendower of to-day were greatly changed from the Maude of fifteen years ago.

To J. C.'s active mind, a new idea was presented, and seeking out the other Maude—*his Maude*—he told her of his suspicion. There was a momentary pang, a thought of the willow-shaded grave where Kate and Matty slept, and then Maude Remington calmly questioned J. C. of Maude Glendower—who she was, and where did she live?

J. C. knew but little of the lady, but what little he knew, he told. She was of both English and Spanish descent. Her friends, he believed, were nearly all dead, and she was alone in the world. Though forty years of

age, she was well preserved, and called a wondrous beauty. She was a belle—a flirt—a spinster, and was living at present in Troy, at a fashionable boarding-house on Second street, and this was all he knew.

"She'll never marry the doctor," said Maude, laughing, as she thought of an elegant woman leaving the world of fashion, to be mistress of that house.

Still the idea followed her, and when at last J. C. had bidden her adieu, and gone to his city home, she frequently found herself thinking of the beautiful Maude Glendower, whose name, it seemed to her, she had heard before, though when or where she could not tell. A strange interest was awakened in her bosom for the unknown lady, and she often wondered if they would ever meet. The doctor thought of her, too,—thought of her often, and thought of her long, and as his feelings toward her changed, so did his manner soften toward the dark-haired girl who bore her name, and who he began at last to fancy resembled her in more points than one. Maude was ceasing to be an object of perfect indifference to him. She was an engaged young lady, and as such, entitled to more respect than he was wont to pay her, and as the days wore on, he began to have serious thoughts of making her his confidant and counsellor in a matter which he would never have entrusted to Nellie.

Accordingly, one afternoon, when he found her sitting upon the piazza, he said, first casting an anxious glance around, to make sure no one heard him: "Maude, I wish to see you alone for a few minutes."

Wonderingly Maude followed him into the parlor, where her astonishment was in no wise diminished by his shutting the blinds, dropping the curtains, and locking

the door! Maude began to tremble, and when he drew his chair close to her side, she started up, asking to what this was a preliminary.

"Sit down—sit down," he whispered; "I want to tell you something, which you must never mention in the world. You certainly have some sense, or I should not trust you. Maude, I am going—that is, I have every reason to believe—or rather, I should say perhaps—well, anyway, there is a prospect of my being married," and by the time this crisis was reached, the perspiration was dropping fast from his forehead and chin.

"Married!—to whom?" asked Maude.

"You are certain you'll never tell, and that there's no one in the hall," said the doctor, going on tip-toe to the door, and assuring himself there was no one there. Then returning to his seat, he told her a strange story of a marvellously beautiful young girl, with Spanish fire in her lustrous eyes, and a satin gloss on her blue-black curls. Her name was Maude Glendower, and years ago she won his love, leading him on and on until at last he paid her the highest honor a man can pay a woman—he offered her his heart, his hand, his name. But she refused him—scornfully, contemptuously refused him, and he learned afterward that she had encouraged him for the sake of bringing another man to terms!—and that man, whose name the doctor never knew, was a college-student not yet twenty-one.

"I hated her then," said he, "hated this Maude Glendower, for her deception; but I could not forget her, and after Katy died, I sought her again. She was the star of Saratoga, and no match for me. This I had sense enough to see, so I left her in her glory, and three years

after married your departed mother. Maude Glendower has never married, and at the age of forty has come to her senses, and signified her willingness to become my wife,—or that is to say, I have been informed by my sister, that she probably would not refuse me a second time. Now, Maude Remington, I have told you this, because I must talk with some one, and as I before remarked, you are a girl of sense, and will keep the secret. It is a maxim of mine when any thing is to be done, to do it, so I shall visit Miss Glendower immediately, and if I like her well enough shall marry her at once. Not while I am gone, of course, but very soon. I shall start for Troy one week from to-day, and I wish you would attend a little to my wardrobe; it's in a most lamentable condition. My shirts are all worn out, my coat is rusty, and last Sunday I discovered a hole in my pantaloons"—

"Dr. Kennedy," exclaimed Maude, interrupting him, "You surely do not intend to present yourself before the fastidious Miss Glendower, with those old shabby clothes. She would say *No*, sooner than she did before. You must have an entire new suit. You can afford it, too, for you have not had one since mother died."

Dr. Kennedy was never in a condition to be so easily coaxed as now. Maude Glendower had a place in his heart, which no other woman had ever held, and that very afternoon, the village merchant was astonished at the penurious doctor's inquiring the prices of the finest broad-cloth in his store. It seemed a great deal of money to pay, but Maude Remington at his elbow, and Maude Glendower in his mind, conquered at last, and the new suit was bought, including vest, hat, boots and all. There is something in handsome clothes very satisfactory to most

people, and the doctor, when arrayed in his, was conscious of a feeling of pride quite unusual to him. On one point, however, he was obstinate, "he would not spoil them by wearing them on the road, when he could just as well dress at the hotel."

So Maude, between whom and himself there was for the time being quite an amicable understanding, packed them nicely in his trunk, while Hannah and Louis looked on wondering what it could mean.

"The Millennial is comin', or else he's goin' a courtin'," said Hannah, and satisfied that she was right, she went back to the kitchen, while Louis, catching at once at her idea, began to cry, and laying his head on his sister's lap, begged of her to tell him if what Hannah had said were true.

To him, it seemed like trampling on the little grave beneath the willows, and it required all Maude's powers of persuasion to dry his tears, and soothe the pain which every child must feel, when first they know that the lost mother, whose memory they so fondly cherish, is to be succeeded by another.

CHAPTER XL.

MAUDE GLENDOWER.

SHE was a most magnificent looking woman, as she sat within her richly furnished room, on that warm September night, now gazing idly down the street, and again bending her head to catch the first sound of footsteps on the stairs. Personal preservation had been the great study of her life, and forty years had not dimmed the lustre of her soft, black eyes, or woven one thread of silver among the luxuriant curls which clustered in such profusion around her face and neck. *Gray hairs* and Maude Glendower had nothing in common, and the fair, round cheek, the pearly teeth, the youthful bloom, and white, uncovered shoulders, seemed to indicate that time had made an exception in her favor, and dropped her from its wheel.

With a portion of her history the reader is already acquainted. Early orphaned, she was thrown upon the care of an old aunt, who proud of her wondrous beauty, spared no pains to make her what nature seemed to will that she should be, a coquette, and a belle. At seventeen, we find her a school-girl in New Haven, where she turned the heads of all the college-boys, and then murmured because one, a dark-eyed youth of twenty, withheld from her the homage she claimed as her just due. In a fit of pique she besieged a staid, handsome young M. D., of *twenty-seven*, who had just commenced to practice in the city, and who, proudly keeping himself aloof from the college-students,

knew nothing of the youth she so much fancied. Perfectly intoxicated with her beauty, he offered her his hand, and was repulsed. Overwhelmed with disappointment and chagrin, he then left the city, and located himself at Laurel Hill, where now we find him the selfish, overbearing Dr. Kennedy.

But in after years Maude Glendower was punished for that act. The dark-haired student she so much loved was wedded to another, and with a festering wound within her heart, she plunged at once into the giddy world of fashion, slaying her victims by scores, and exulting as each new trophy of her power was laid at her feet. She had no heart, the people said, and with a mocking laugh she thought of the quiet grave 'mid the New England hills, where, one moonlight night, two weeks after that grave was made, she had wept such tears as were never wept by her again. Maude Glendower had loved, but loved in vain; and now, at the age of forty, she was unmarried and alone in the wide world. The aunt, who had been to her a mother, had died a few months before, and as her annuity ceased with her death, Maude was almost wholly destitute. The limited means she possessed would only suffice to pay her board for a short time, and in this dilemma she thought of her old lover, and wondered if he could again be won. He was rich, she had always heard, and as his wife, she could still enjoy the luxuries to which she had been accustomed. She knew his sister—they had met in the saloons of Saratoga, and though it hurt her pride to do it, she at last signified her willingness to be again addressed.

It was many weeks ere Dr. Kennedy conquered wholly his olden grudge, but conquered it he had, and she sat

expecting him on the night when first we introduced her to our readers. He had arrived in Troy on the western train, and written her a note announcing his intention to visit her that evening. For this visit Maude Glendower had arrayed herself with care, wearing a rich silk dress of crimson and black—colors well adapted to her complexion.

"He saw me at twenty-five. He shall not think me greatly changed since then," she said, as over her bare neck and arms she threw an exquisitely wrought mantilla of lace.

The Glendower family had once been very wealthy, and the last daughter of the haughty race glittered with diamonds which had come to her from her great-grandmother, and had been but recently reset. And there she sat, beautiful Maude Glendower—the votary of fashion—the woman of the world—sat waiting for the cold, hard, overbearing man, who thought to make her his wife. A ring at the door, a heavy tread upon the winding stairs, and the lady rests her head upon her hand, so that her glossy curls fall over, but do not conceal her white, rounded arm, where the diamonds are shining.

"I could easily mistake him for my father," she thought, as a gray-haired man stepped into the room, where he paused an instant, bewildered with the glare of light and the display of pictures, mirrors, tapestry, rosewood and marble, which met his view.

"Mrs. Berkley, Maude Glendower's aunt, had stinted herself to gratify her nieces whims, and their surroundings had always been of the most expensive kind, so it was not strange that Dr. Kennedy, accustomed only to ingrain carpet, and muslin curtains, was dazzled by so

much elegance. With a well feigned start the lady arose to her feet, and going to his side offered him her hand, saying: "You are Dr. Kennedy, I am sure. I should have known you any where, for you are but little changed."

She meant to flatter his self-love, though thanks to Maude Remington for having insisted upon the broad cloth suit, he looked remarkably well.

"She had not changed at all," he said, and the admiring gaze he fixed upon her, argued well for her success.

It becomes us not to tell how that strange wooing sped. Suffice it to say, that at the expiration of an hour, Maude Glendower had promised to be the wife of Dr. Kennedy, when another spring should come. She had humbled herself to say that she regretted her girlish freak, and he had so far unbent his dignity as to say that he could not understand why she should be willing to leave the luxuries which surrounded her and go with him, a plain old fashioned man. Maude Glendower scorned to make him think that it was love which actuated her, and she replied, "Now that my aunt is dead, I have no natural protector. I am alone and want a home."

"But mine is so different," he said: "There are no silk curtains there, no carpets such as this"—

"Is Maude Remington there?" the lady asked, and in her large black eyes there was a dewy tenderness, as she pronounced that name.

"Maude Remington!—yes," the doctor answered. "Where did you hear of her? My sister told you, I suppose. Yes, Maude is there. She has lived with me ever since her mother died. You would have liked *Mattie*, I think," and the doctor felt a glow of satisfaction in having thus paid a tribute to the memory of his wife.

"Is Maude like her mother?" the lady asked; a deeper glow upon her cheek, and the expression of her face evincing the interest she felt in the answer.

"Not at all," returned the doctor. "Mattie was blue-eyed and fair, while Maude is dark, and resembles her father, they say."

The white jeweled hands were clasped together for a moment, and then Maude Glendower questioned him of the other one, Matty's child and his. Very tenderly the doctor talked of his unfortunate boy, telling of his soft brown hair, his angel face and dreamy eyes.

"He is like Matty," the lady said, more to herself than her companion, who proceeded to speak of Nellie, as a paragon of loveliness and virtue. "I shan't like her, I know," the lady thought, "but the other two," how her heart bounded at the thoughts of folding them to her bosom.

Louis Kennedy, weeping that his mother was forgotten, had nothing to fear from Maude Glendower, for a child of Matty Remington was a sacred trust to her, and when as the doctor bade her good night, he said again, "You will find a great contrast between your home and mine," she answered, "I shall be contented if Maude and Louis are there."

"And Nellie, too," the doctor added, unwilling that she should be overlooked.

"Yes, Nellie too," the lady answered, the expression of her mouth indicating that *Nellie too*, was an object of indifference to her.

The doctor is gone, his object is accomplished, and at the Mansion House near by, he sleeps quietly and well.

But the lady, Maude Glendower, oh, who shall tell what bitter tears she wept, or how in her inmost soul she shrank from the man she had chosen. And yet there was nothing repulsive in him, she knew. He was fine-looking,—he stood well in the world,—he was rich while she was poor. But not for this alone, had she promised to be his wife. To hold Maude Remington within her arms, to look into her eyes, to call *his* daughter *child*, *this* was the strongest reason of them all. And was it strange that when at last she slept, she was a girl again, looking across the college green to catch a glimpse of one whose indifference had made her what she was, a selfish, scheming, cold-hearted woman.

There was another interview next morning, and then the doctor left her, but not until with her soft hand in his, and her shining eyes upon his face, she said to him, "You think your home is not a desirable one for me. Can't you fix it up a little? Are there two parlors, and do the windows come to the floor? I hope your carriage horses are in good condition, for I am very fond of driving. Have you a flower garden? I anticipate much pleasure in working among the plants. Oh, it will be so cool and nice in the country. You have an ice-house of course."

Poor doctor! Double parlors—low windows—ice-house, and flower-garden—he had none—while the old carry-all had long since ceased to do its duty, and its place was supplied by an open buggy, drawn by a sorrel nag. But Maude Glendower could do with him what Katy and Matty could not have done, and after his return to Laurel Hill, he was more than once closeted with Maude, to whom he confided his plan of improving the place, asking her if she thought the profits of next year's crop of wheat

and wool would meet the whole expense. Maude guessed at random that it would, and, as money in prospect seems not quite so valuable as money in hand, the doctor finally concluded to follow out Maude Glendower's suggestions, and greatly to the surprise of the neighbors, the repairing process commenced.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW THE ENGAGEMENTS PROSPERED.

THE October sun had painted the forest trees with the gorgeous tints of autumn, and the November winds had changed them to a more sober hue, ere J. C. De Vere came again to Laurel Hill. Very regularly he wrote to Maude—kind, loving letters, which helped to cheer her solitary life. Nellie still remained with Mrs. Kelsey, and though she had so far forgiven her step-sister as to write to her occasionally, she still cherished toward her a feeling of animosity for having stolen away her lover.

On his return to Rochester, J. C. De Vere had fully expected that his engagement would be the theme of every tongue, and he had prepared himself for the attack. How, then, was he surprised to find that no one had the least suspicion of it, though many joked him for having quarreled with Nellie, as they were sure he had done, by his not returning when she did.

Mrs. Kelsey had changed her mind, and resolved to say nothing of an affair which she was sure would never prove to be serious, and the result showed the wisdom of her proceeding. No one spoke of Maude to J. C., for no one knew of her existence, and both Mrs. Kelsey and Nellie, whom he frequently met, scrupulously refrained from mentioning her name. At first he felt annoyed, and more than once was tempted to tell of his engagement, but as time wore on, and he became more and more interested

in city gaieties, he thought less frequently of the dark-eyed Maude, who, with fewer sources of amusement, was each day thinking more and more of him. Still, he was sure he loved her, and one morning near the middle of November, when he received a letter from her saying, "I am sometimes very lonely, and wish that you were here," he started up with his usual impetuosity, and ere he was fully aware of his own intentions, he found himself ticketed for Canandaigua, and the next morning Louis Kennedy, looking from his window, and watching the daily stage as it came slowly up the hill, screamed out, "He's come—he's come."

A few moments more, and Maude was clasped in J. C.'s arms. Kissing her forehead, her cheek, and her lips, he held her off and looked to see if she had changed. She had, and he knew it. Happiness and contentment are more certain beautifiers than the most powerful cosmetics, and under the combined effects of both, Maude was greatly improved. She was happy in her engagement, happy in the increased respect it brought her from her friends, and happy, too, in the unusual kindness of her step-father. All this was manifest in her face, and for the first time in his life, J. C. told her she was beautiful.

"If you only had more manner, and your clothes were fashionably made, you would far excel the city-girls," he said, a compliment which to Maude seemed rather equivocal.

When he was there before, he had not presumed to criticize her style of dress, but he did so now, quoting the city belles, until, half in earnest, half in jest, Maude said to him, "If you think so much of fashion, you ought not to marry a country girl."

"Pshaw!" returned J. C. "I like you all the better for dressing as you please, and still I wish you could acquire a little city polish, for I don't care to have my wife the subject of remark. If Maude Glendower comes in the spring, you can learn a great deal of her before the twentieth of June."

Maude colored deeply, thinking for the first time in her life that possibly J. C. might be ashamed of her, but his affectionate caresses soon drove all unpleasant impressions from her mind, and the three days that he staid with her passed rapidly away. He did not mention the *will*, but he questioned her of the five thousand which was to be hers on her eighteenth birthday, and vaguely hinted that he might need it to set himself up in business. He had made no arrangements for the future, he said, there was time enough in the spring, and promising to be with her again during the holidays, he left her quite uncertain as to whether she were glad he had visited her or not.

The next day she was greatly comforted by a long letter from *James*, who wrote occasionally, evincing so much interest in "Cousin Maude," that he always succeeded in making her cry, though why she could not tell, for his letters gave her more real satisfaction than did those of J. C., fraught as the latter were with protestations of constancy and love. Slowly dragged the weeks, and the holidays were at hand, when she received a message from J. C., saying he could not possibly come as he had promised. No reason was given for this change in his plan, and with a sigh of disappointment, Maude turned to a letter from Nellie, received by the same mail. After dwelling at length upon the delightful time she was having in the city, Nellie spoke of a *fancy ball*, to be given by her

aunt during Christmas week. Mr. De Vere was to be *Ivanhoe*, she said, and she to be *Rowena*.

"You don't know," she wrote, "how interested J. C. is in the party. He really begins to appear more as he used to do. He has not forgotten you, though, for he said the other day you would make a splendid Rebecca. It takes a dark person for that, I believe!"

Maude knew the reason now why J. C. could not possibly come, and the week she had anticipated so much, seemed dreary enough, notwithstanding it was enlivened by a box of oranges and figs from her betrothed, and a long, affectionate letter from James De Vere, who spoke of the next Christmas, saying he meant she should spend it at Hampton.

"You will really be my cousin then," he wrote, "and I intend inviting yourself and husband to pass the holidays with us. I want my mother to know you, Maude. She will like you, I am sure, for she always thinks as I do."

This letter was far more pleasing to Maude's taste than were the oranges and figs, and Louis was suffered to monopolize the latter—a privilege which he appreciated as children usually do.

After the holidays, J. C. paid a flying visit to Laurel Hill, where his presence caused quite as much pain as pleasure, so anxious he seemed to return. Rochester could not well exist without him, one would suppose, from hearing him talk of the rides he planned, the surprise parties he managed, and the private theatricals of which he was the leader.

"Do they pay you well for your services?" Louis asked him once, when wearying of the same old story.

J. C. understood the *hit*, and during the remainder of his stay was far less egotistical than he would otherwise have been. After his departure, there ensued an interval of quiet, which, as spring approached, was broken by the doctor's resuming the work of repairs, which had been suspended during the coldest weather. The partition between the parlor and the large square bed-room was removed; folding-doors were made between; the windows were cut down; a carpet was bought to match the one which Maude had purchased the summer before; and then, when all was done, the doctor was seized with a fit of *the blues*, because it had cost so much. But he could afford to be extravagant for a wife like Maude Glendower, and trusting much to the wheat-crop and the wool, he started for Troy, about the middle of March, fully expecting to receive from the lady a decisive answer as to when she would make them both perfectly happy!

With a most winning smile upon her lip and a bewitching glance in her black eyes, Maude Glendower took his hand in hers, and begged for a little longer freedom.

"Wait till next fall," she said; "I must go to Saratoga one more summer. I shall never be happy if I don't, and you, I dare say, wouldn't enjoy it a bit."

The doctor was not so sure of that. Her eyes, her voice, and the soft touch of her hand, made him feel very queer, and he was almost willing to go to Saratoga himself, if by these means he could secure her.

"How much do they charge?" he asked; and, with a flash of her bright eyes, the lady answered, "I presume both of us can get along with thirty or forty dollars a week, including every thing; but that isn't much, as I don't care to stay more than two months!"

This decided the doctor. He had not three hundred dollars to throw away, and so he tried to persuade his companion to give up Saratoga and go with him to Laurel Hill, telling her, as an inducement, of the improvements he had made.

"There were two parlors now," he said, "and with her handsome furniture they would look remarkably well."

She did not tell him that her handsome furniture was mortgaged for board and borrowed money—neither did she say that her object in going to Saratoga was, to try her powers upon a rich old Southern bachelor, who had returned from Europe, and who she knew was to pass the coming summer at the Springs. If she could secure him, Dr. Kennedy might console himself as best he could, and she begged so hard to defer their marriage until the autumn, that the doctor gave up the contest, and, with a heavy heart, prepared to turn his face homeward.

You need not make any more repairs until I come, I'd rather see to them myself, Miss Glendower said at parting; and wondering what further improvements she could possibly suggest, now that the parlor windows were all right, the doctor bade her adieu, and started for home.

Hitherto, Maude had been his confidant, keeping her trust so well that no one at Laurel Hill knew exactly what his intentions were, and, as was very natural, immediately after his return, he went to her for sympathy in his disappointment. He found her weeping bitterly, and ere he could lay before her his own grievances, she appealed to him for sympathy and aid. The man to whom her money was intrusted, had speculated largely, loaning some of it out West, at twenty per cent.—investing some in doubtful railroad stocks, and experimenting with the

rest, until, by some unlucky chance he lost the whole, and, worse than all, had nothing of his own with which to make amends. In short, Maude was penniless, and J. C. De Vere in despair. She had written to him immediately, and he had come, suggesting nothing, offering no advice, and saying nothing at first, except that "the man was mighty mean, and he had never liked his looks."

After a little, however, he rallied somewhat, and offered the consolatory remark, that "they were in a mighty bad fix. I'll be honest," said he, "and confess that I depended upon that money to set me up in business. I was going to shave notes, and in order to do so, I must have some ready capital. It *cramps* me," he continued, "for, as a married man, my expenses will necessarily be more than they now are."

"We can defer our marriage," sobbed Maude, whose heart throbbed painfully with every word he uttered. "We can defer our marriage awhile, and possibly a part of my fortune may be regained—or, if you wish it, I will release you at once. You need not wed a penniless bride," and Maude hid her face in her hands, while she awaited the answer to her suggestion. J. C. De Vere did love Maude Remington better than any one he had ever seen, and though he caught eagerly at the marriage deferred, he was not then willing to give her up, and, with one of his impetuous bursts, he exclaimed, "I *will not* be released, though it may be wise to postpone our bridal day for a time, say until Christmas next, when I hope to be established in business," and, touched by the suffering expression of her white face, he kissed her tears away, and told her how gladly he would work for her, painting "love in a cottage," with nothing else there, until he really made

himself believe that he could live on bread and water with Maude, provided she gave him the lion's share!

J. C.'s great faults were selfishness, indolence, and love of money, and Maude's loss affected him deeply; still, there was no redress, and playfully bidding her "not to cry for the milkman's spilled milk," he left her on the very day when Dr. Kennedy returned. Maude knew J. C. was keenly disappointed; that he was hardly aware what he was saying, and she wept for him rather than for the money.

Dr. Kennedy could offer no advice—no comfort. It had always been a maxim of his not to make that man her guardian; but women would do every thing wrong, and then, as if his own trials were paramount to hers, he bored her with the story of his troubles, to which she simply answered, "I am sorry;" and this was all the sympathy either gained from the other!

In the course of a few days, Maude received a long letter from James De Vere. He had heard from J. C. of *his* misfortune, and very tenderly he strove to comfort her, touching at once upon the subject which he naturally supposed lay heaviest upon her heart. The marriage need not be postponed, he said: "There was room in his house and a place in his own and his mother's affections for their "Cousin Maude." She could live there as well as not. Hampton was only half an hour's ride from Rochester and J. C., who had been admitted at the bar, could open an office in the city, until something better presented.

"Perhaps I may set him up in business myself," he wrote. "At all events, dear Maude, you need not dim the brightness of your eyes by tears, for all will yet be well. Next June shall see you a bride, unless your in-

tended husband refuse my offer, in which case I may divine something better."

"Noble man," was Maude's exclamation, as she finished reading the letter, and if at that moment the two cousins rose up in contrast before her mind, who can blame her for awarding the preference to him who had penned those lines, and who thus kindly strove to remove from her pathway every obstacle to her happiness.

James De Vere was indeed a noble-hearted man. Generous, kind and self-denying, he found his chief pleasure in doing others good, and he had written both to Maude and J. C. just as the great kindness of his heart had prompted him to write. He did not then know that he loved Maude Remington, for he had never fully analyzed the nature of his feelings toward her. He knew he admired her very much, and when he wrote the note J. C. withheld, he said to himself, "If she answers this, I shall write again—and again, and maybe"—he did not exactly know what lay beyond the *maybe*, so he added, "we shall be very good friends."

But the note was not answered, and when his cousin's letter came, telling him of the engagement, a sharp, quick pang shot through his heart, eliciting from him a faint outcry, which caused his mother, who was present, to ask what was the matter.

"Only a sudden pain," he answered, laying his hand upon his side.

"*Pleurisy*, perhaps," the practical mother rejoined, and supposing she was right, he placed the letter in his pocket, and went out into the open air. It had grown uncomfortably warm, he thought, while the noise of the falling fountain in the garden made his head ache as it had never

ached before; and returning to the house, he sought his pleasant library. But not a volume in all those crowded shelves had power to interest him then, and with a strange disquiet, he wandered from room to room, until at last as the sun went down, he laid his throbbing temples upon his pillow, and in his feverish dreams, saw again the dark-eyed Maude sitting on her mother's grave, her face upturned to him, and on her lip the smile that formed her greatest beauty.

The next morning the headache was gone, and with a steady hand he wrote to his cousin and Maude, congratulations which he believed sincere. That J. C. was not worthy of the maiden he greatly feared, and he resolved to have a care of the young man, and try to make him what Maude's husband ought to be, and when he heard of her misfortune, he stepped forward with his generous offer, which J. C. instantly refused.

"He never would take *his wife* to live upon his relatives, he had too much pride for that, and the marriage must be deferred. A few months would make no difference. Christmas was not far from June, and by that time he could do something for himself."

Thus he wrote to James, who mused long upon the words, "A few months will make no difference," thinking within himself, "If I were like other men, and was about to marry Maude, a few months would make a good deal of difference, but every one to their mind."

Four weeks after this he went one day to Canandaigua on business, and having an hour's leisure ere the arrival of the train which would take him home, he sauntered into the public parlor of the hotel. Near the window, at the farther extremity of the room, a young girl was looking

out upon the passers-by. Something in her form and dress attracted his attention, and he was approaching the spot where she stood, when the sound of his footsteps caught her ear, and turning round she disclosed to view the features of Maude Remington.

"Maude!" he exclaimed, "this is indeed a surprise. I must even claim a cousin's right to kiss you," and taking both her hands in his, he kissed her blushing cheek—coily—timidly—for James De Vere was unused to such things, and not quite certain, whether under the circumstances it were perfectly proper for him to do so or not.

Leading her to the sofa, he soon learned that she had come to the village to trade, and having finished her shopping was waiting for her stepfather, who had accompanied her.

"And what of J. C.?" he asked after a moment's silence. "Has he been to visit you more than once since the *crisis*, as he calls it?"

Maude's eyes filled with tears, for J. C.'s conduct was not wholly satisfactory to her. She remembered his loud protestations of utter disregard for her *money*, and she could not help thinking how little his theory and practice accorded. He had not been to see her since his flying visit in March, and though he had written several times, his letters had contained little else save complaints against their "confounded luck." She could not tell this to James De Vere, and she replied, "He is very busy now, I believe, in trying to make some business arrangement with the lawyer in whose office he formerly studied."

"I am glad he has roused himself at last," answered James, "he would not accept my offer, for which I am sorry, as I was anticipating much happiness in having my

Cousin Maude at Hampton during the summer. You will remain at home, I suppose."

"No," said Maude, hesitatingly, "or that is I have serious thoughts of teaching school, as I do not like to be dependent on Dr. Kennedy."

James De Vere had once taught school for a few weeks, by way of experiment, and now as he recalled the heated room, the stifling atmosphere, the constant care, and more than all, the noisy shout of triumph which greeted his ear on that memorable morning, when he found himself fastened out, and knew his rule was at an end, he shuddered at the thought of Maude's being exposed to similar indignities, and used all his powers of eloquence to dissuade her from her plan. Maude was frank, open-hearted and impulsive, and emboldened by James' kind, brotherly manner, she gave in a most childlike way, her reason for wishing to teach.

"If I am married next winter," she said, "my wardrobe will need replenishing, for J. C., would surely be ashamed to take me as I am, and I have now no means of my own for purchasing any thing."

In an instant James De Vere's hand was on his purse, but ere he drew it forth, he reflected that to offer money then might possibly be out of place, so he said, "I have no sister, no girl-cousin, no wife, and more money than I can use, and when the right time comes nothing can please me more than to give you your bridal outfit. May I, Maude? And if you do not like to stay with Dr. Kennedy, come to Hampton this summer and live with us, will you, Maude? I want you there so much," and in the musical tones of his voice there was a deep pathos which brought the tears in torrents from Maude's eyes,

while she declined the generous offer she could not accept.

Just then Dr. Kennedy appeared, he was ready to go, he said, and bidding Mr. De Vere good bye, Maude was soon on her way home, her spirits lighter and her heart happier for that chance meeting at the Hotel. One week later Mr. De Vere wrote to her, saying that if she still wished to teach, she could have the school at Hampton. He had seen the trustees, had agreed upon the price, and had even selected her a boarding place near by.

"I regret," said he, "that we live so far from the school house as to render it impossible for you to board with us. You might ride, I suppose, and I would cheerfully carry you every day; but, on the whole, I think you had better stop with Mrs. Johnson."

This letter Maude took at once to her brother, from whom she had hitherto withheld her intention to teach, as she did not wish to pain him unnecessarily with the dread of a separation, which might never be. Deeply had he sympathized with her in her misfortune, whispering to her that two-thirds of his own inheritance should be hers.

"I can coax almost any thing from father," he said, "and when I am twenty-one, I'll ask him to give me my portion, and then I'll take you to Europe. You won't be old, Maude, only twenty-seven, and I shall be proud when the people say that beautiful woman with eyes like stars is the crippled artist's sister!"

In all *his* plans he made no mention of J. C., whose conduct he despised, and whose character he began to read aright.

"Maude will never marry him, I hope," he thought, and when she brought to him the letter from James De

Vere, the noble little fellow conquered his own feelings, and with a hopeful heart as to the result of that summer's teaching, he bade her go. So it was all arranged, and the next letter which went from Maude to J. C. carried the intelligence that his betrothed was going "to turn country school-ma'am, and teach the Hampton brats their A B C's," so at last he said to Mrs. Kelsey and her niece, between whom and himself there was a perfectly good understanding, and to whom he talked of his future prospects without reserve. Mrs. Kelsey was secretly delighted, for matters were shaping themselves much as she would wish. Her brother evinced no particular desire to have his daughter at home, and she determined to keep her as long as there was the slightest chance of winning J. C. De Vere. He was now a regular visitor at her house, and, lest he should suspect her design, she spoke often and respectfully of *Maude*, whose cause she seemed to have espoused, and when he came to her with the news of her teaching, she sympathized with him at once.

"It would be very mortifying," she said, "to marry a district school-mistress, though there was some comfort in knowing that his friends were as yet ignorant of the engagement."

"Let them remain so a while longer," was the hasty answer of J. C., who, as time passed on, became more and more unwilling that the gay world should know of his engagement with one who was not an heiress after all.

CHAPTER XIII.

HAMPTON.

Six happy weeks Maude had been a teacher, and though she knew J. C. did not approve her plan, she was more than repaid for his displeasure by the words of encouragement which James always had in store for her. Many times had she been to the handsome home of the De Vere's, and the lady-mother, whom she at first so much dreaded to meet, had more than once stroked her silken curls, calling her "my child," as tenderly as if she did indeed bear that relation to her. James De Vere was one of the trustees, and in that capacity he visited the school so often, that the wise villagers shook their heads significantly, saying, "if he were any other man they should think the rights of J. C. were in danger."

The young school-mistress's engagement with the fashionable *Jedediah* was generally known, and thus were the public blinded to the true state of affairs. Gradually, James De Vere had learned how dear to him was the dark-eyed girl he called his "Cousin Maude." There was no light like that which shone in her truthful eyes—no music so sweet as the sound of her gentle voice—no presence which brought him so much joy as her's—no being in the world he loved so well. But she belonged to another—the time had passed when she might have been won. She could never be his, he said; and with his love he waged a mighty battle—a battle which lasted days and

nights, wringing from him more than one bitter moan, as, with his face bowed in his hands, he murmured sadly, the mournful words, "*It might have been.*"

Yes, it might have been; it could be still; but this he did not know. He knew J. C. was fickle in most matters, but he did not deem it possible that, having loved Maude Remington once, he could cease from loving her; neither did he understand why her eyes drooped so oft beneath his gaze, or why the color always deepened on her cheek when he was near. Maude, too, was waking up, and the school-house witnessed more than one fierce struggle between her duty and her inclinations; for, with woman's tact, she knew that she was not indifferent to James De Vere; but she was plighted to another, and if he bade her keep her word, she would do so, e'en though it broke her heart.

Matters were in this condition when J. C. came one day to Hampton, accompanied by some city friends, among whom were a few young ladies of the Kelsey order. Maude saw them as they passed the school-house in the village omnibus; saw, too, how resolutely J. C.'s head was turned away, as if afraid their eyes would meet.

"He wishes to show his resentment, but of course he'll visit me ere he returns," she thought. And many times that day she cast her eyes in the direction of *Hampton Park*, as the De Vere residence was often called.

But she looked in vain, and with a feeling of disappointment she dismissed her school, and glad to be alone, laid her head upon the desk, falling ere long asleep, for the day was warm, and she was very tired. So quietly she slept, that she did not hear the roll of wheels, nor the sound of merry voices, as the party from the city rode by

on their way to the depot. Neither half an hour later, did she hear the hasty footstep which crossed the threshold of the door; but when a hand was laid upon her shoulder, and a well-known voice bade her awake, she started up, and saw before her James De Vere. He had been to her boarding-place, he said, and not finding her there, had sought her in the school-house.

"I have two letters for you," he continued, "one from your brother, and one from J. C."

"From J. C.!" she repeated. "Has he gone back? Why didn't he call on me?"

"He's a villain," thought James De Vere, but he answered simply, "he had not time, and so wrote you instead," and sitting down beside her, he regarded her with a look in which pity, admiration, and love were all blended—the former predominating at that moment, and causing him to lay his hand caressingly on her forehead, saying, as he did so, "Your head aches, don't it, Maude?"

Maude's heart was already full, and at this little act of sympathy, she burst into tears, while James, drawing her to his side, and resting her head upon his bosom, soothed her as he would have done had she been his only sister. He fancied that he knew the cause of her grief, and his heart swelled with indignation toward J. C., who had that day shown himself unworthy of a girl like Maude. He had come to Hampton without any definite idea as to whether he should see her or not ere his return, but when, as the omnibus drew near the schoolhouse, and Maude was plainly visible through the open window, one of the ladies made some slighting remark concerning school-teachers generally, he determined not to hazard an interview, and quieted his conscience by thinking he would

come out in a few days and make the matter right. How then was he chagrined when in the presence of his companions, his cousin said: "Shall I send for Miss Remington? She can dismiss her school earlier than usual, and come up to tea."

"Dismiss her school!" cried one of the young ladies, while the other, the proud Miss Thayer, whose grandfather was a pedlar and whose great-uncle had been *hung*, exclaimed, "*Miss Remington!* Pray who is she? That schoolmistress we saw in passing? Really Mr. De Vere, you have been careful not to tell us of this new acquaintance. Where did you pick her up?" and the diamonds on her fingers shone brightly in the sunshine as she playfully pulled a lock of J. C.'s hair.

The disconcerted J. C. was about stammering out some reply, when James, astonished both at the apparent ignorance of his guests, and the strangeness of his cousin's manner, answered for him, "Miss Remington is our teacher, and a splendid girl. J. C. became acquainted with her last summer at Laurel Hill. She is a step-sister of Miss Kennedy, whom you probably know."

"Nellie Kennedy's step-sister. I never knew there was such a being," said Miss Thayer, while young Robinson, a lisping, insipid dandy, drawled out, "A sthool marm, J. Thee? P'th really romantic! Thend for her of courth. A little dithipline wont hurt any of uth."

J. C. made a faint effort to rally, but they joked him so hard that he remained silent, while James regarded him with a look of cool contempt sufficiently indicative of his opinion.

At last when Miss Thayer asked, "if the bridal day were fixed," he roused himself, and thinking if he told the

truth, he should effectually deceive them, he answered, "Yes, next Christmas is the time appointed. We were to have been married in *June*, but the lady lost her fortune, and the marriage was deferred.

"Oh, teaching to purchase her bridal trousseau. I'm dying to see it," laughingly replied Miss Thayer, while another rejoined, "Lost her fortune. Was she then an heiress?"

"Yes, a milkman's heiress," said J. C., with a slightly scornful emphasis on the name which he himself had given to Maude, at a time when a milkman's money seemed as valuable to him as that of any other man.

There was a dark, stern look on the face of James De Vere, and as Miss Thayer, the ruling spirit of the party, had an eye on him and his broad lands, she deemed it wise to change the conversation from the "Milkman's Heiress" to a topic less displeasing to their handsome host. In the course of the afternoon the cousins were alone for a few moments, when the elder demanded of the other: "Do you pretend to love Maude Remington, and still make light both of her and your engagement with her?"

"I pretend to nothing which is not real," was J. C.'s haughty answer; "but I do dislike having my matters canvassed by every silly tongue, and have consequently kept my relation to Miss Remington a secret. I cannot see her to-day, but with your permission I will pen a few lines by way of explanation," and, glad to escape from the rebuking glance he knew he so much deserved, he stepped into his cousin's library, where he wrote the note James gave to Maude.

Under some circumstances it would have been a very

unsatisfactory message, but with her changed feelings toward the writer, and James De Vere sitting at her side, she scarcely noticed how cold it was, and throwing it down, tore open Louis's letter which had come in the evening mail. It was very brief, and hastily perusing its contents, Maude cast it from her with a cry of horror and disgust—then catching it up, she moaned, "Oh, must I go!—I can't! I can't!"

"What is it?" asked Mr. De Vere, and pointing to the lines, Maude bade him read.

He did read, and as he read, his own cheek blanched, and he wound his arm closely round the maiden's waist as if to keep her there, and thus save her from danger. Dr. Kennedy had the *smallpox*, so Louis wrote, and Nellie, who had been home for a few days, had fled in fear back to the city. Hannah, too, had gone, and there was no one left to care for the sick man, save John and the almost helpless Louis.

"Father is so sick," he wrote, "and he says, tell Maude for humanity's sake to come."

If there was one disease more than another of which Maude stood in mortal fear, it was the smallpox, and her first impulse was, "I will not go." But when she reflected that Louis, too, might take it, and need her care, her resolution changed, and moving away from her companion, she said firmly, "I must go, for if any thing befall my brother, how can I answer to our mother for having betrayed my trust. Dr. Kennedy, too, was *her* husband, and he must not be left to die alone."

Mr. De Vere was about to expostulate, but she prevented him by saying, "Do not urge me to stay, but rather help me to go, for I must leave Hampton to-morrow. You

will get some one to take my place, as I, of course, shall not return, and if I have it—"

Here she paused, while the trembling of her body showed how terrible to her was the dread of the disease.

"Maude Remington," said Mr. De Vere, struck with admiration by her noble, self-sacrificing spirit, "I will not bid you stay, for I know it would be useless, but if that which you so much fear comes upon you, if the face now so fair to look upon be marred and disfigured until not a lineament is left of the once beautiful girl, come back to me. I will love you all the same."

As he spoke, he stretched his arms involuntarily toward her, and scarce knowing what she did, she went forward to the embrace. Very lovingly he folded her for a moment to his bosom, then turning her face to the fading sunlight which streamed through the dingy window, he looked at it wistfully and long, as if he would remember every feature. Pushing back the silken curls which clustered around her forehead, he kissed her twice, and then releasing her, said; "Forgive me, Maude, if I have taken more than a cousin's liberty with you, I could not help it."

Bewildered at his words and manner, Maude raised her eyes wonderingly to his, and looking into the shining orbs, he thought how soft, how beautiful they were, but little, little did he dream their light would e'er be quenched in midnight darkness. Awhile longer they talked together, Mr. De Vere promising to send a servant to take her home in the morning. Then, as the sun had set, and the night shadows were deepening in the room, they bade each other good-bye, and ere the next day's sun was very high in the heavens, Maude was far on her way to Laurel Hill.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DARK HOUR.

DR. KENNEDY had been to Buffalo, and taken the small-pox, so his attending physician said, and the news spread rapidly, frightening nervous people as they never were frightened before. Nellie had been home for a week or two, but at the first alarm she fled, rushing headlong through the hall and down the stairs, unmindful of the tremulous voice, which cried imploringly, "Don't leave me, daughter, to die alone!"

Hannah followed next, holding the camphor bottle to her nose, and saying to John when he expostulated with her, "I reckon I'se not gwine to spile what little beauty I've got with that fetched complaint."

"But, mother," persisted John, "may be its nothin' but *very-o-lord* after all, and that don't mark folks, you know."

"You needn't talk to me about your *very-o-lord*," returned Hannah. "I know it's the *very-o-devil* himself, and I wont have them pock-ed marks on me for all the niggers in Virginny."

"Then go," said John, "hold tight to the camphire, and run for your life, or it may cotch you before you git out of the house."

Hannah needed no second bidding to run, and half an hour later she was domesticated with a colored family, who lived not far from the Hill. Thus left to themselves,

Louis and John, together with the physician, did what they could for the sick man, who at last proposed sending for Maude, feeling intuitively that *she* would not desert him as his own child had done. Silent, desolate and forsaken the old house looked as Maude approached it, and she involuntarily held her breath as she stepped into the hall, whose close air seemed laden with infection. She experienced no difficulty in finding the sick room, where Louis' cry of delight, John's expression of joy, and the sick man's whispered words, "God bless you, Maude," more than recompensed her for the risk she had incurred. Gradually her fear subsided, particularly when she learned that it was in fact the varioloid. Had it been possible to remove her brother from danger, she would have done so, but it was too late now, and she suffered him to share her vigils, watching carefully for the first symptoms of the disease in him.

In this manner nearly two weeks passed away, and the panic stricken villagers were beginning to breathe more freely, when it was told them one day that Maude and Louis were both smitten with the disease. Then indeed the more humane said to themselves, "Shall they be left to suffer alone?" and still no one was found who dared to breathe the air of the sick room. Dr. Kennedy was by this time so much better, that Louis was taken to his apartment, where he ministered to him himself, while the heroic Maude was left to the care of John. Every thing he could do for her he did, but his heart sunk within him when he saw how fast her fever came on, and heard her, in her sleep, mourn for her mother, to hold her aching head.

"She mustn't die," he said, and over his dark skin the

tears rolled like rain, as raising his eyes to the ceiling, he cried imploringly, "Will the good Father send some one to help?"

The prayer of the weak African was heard; and, ere the sun went down, a man of noble mien and noble heart stood at the maiden's bedside, bathing her swollen face, pushing back her silken curls, counting her rapid pulses, and once, when she slept, kissing her parched lips, e'en though he knew that with that kiss, he inhaled, perhaps, his death! James De Vere had never, for a day, lost sight of Maude. Immediately after her return he had written to the physician, requesting a daily report, and when, at last, he learned that she was ill, and all alone, he came unhesitatingly, presenting a striking contrast to the timid J. C., who had heard of her illness, and, at first, dared not open the letter which his cousin wrote, apprising him of Maude's affliction. But when he reflected that he could be re-vaccinated, and thus avert the dreaded evil, he broke the seal, and read, commenting as follows; "Jim is a splendid fellow, though I can't see why he takes so much interest in her. Don't I have confounded luck though? That *will* first, the five thousand dollars next, and now the small pox, too. Of course she'll be marked, and look like a fright. Poor girl! I'd help her if I could," and, as the better nature of J. C. came over him, he added, mournfully: "What if she should die?"

But Maude did not die; and at the expiration of ten days, she was so far out of danger, that James De Vere yielded to the importunity of his mother, who, in an agony of terror, besought him to return. When first he came to her bedside, Maude had begged of him to leave her, and not risk his life in her behalf; but he silenced her

objections then, and now when he bade her adieu, he would not listen to her protestations of gratitude.

"I would do even more for you if I could," he said. "I am not afraid of the varioloid, and henceforth I shall think gratefully of it for having dealt so lightly with you."

So saying, he turned away, feeling happier than he could well express, that Maude had not only escaped from death, but that there would be no marks left to tell how near the ravager had been. Scarcely had the door closed on him, when, emboldened by his last words to ask a question she greatly wished, yet dreaded to ask, Maude turned to John and said, "Am I much pitted?"

Rolling up his eyes, and wholly mistaking her meaning, John replied, "I ain't no great of a physiognomer, but when a thing is as plain as day, I can discern it as well as the next one, and if that ar' chap hain't *pitied* you, and done a heap more'n that, I'm mistaken."

"But," continued Maude, smiling at his simplicity, "I mean shall I probably be scarred?"

"Oh, bless you, not a scar," answered John, "for don't you mind how he kep' the iled silk and wet rags on yer face, and how that night when you was sickest, he held yer hands so you couldn't tache that little feller between yer eyes. That was the spunkiest varmint of 'em all, and may leave a mark like the one under yer ear, but it won't spile yer looks an atom."

"And Louis?" said Maude, "is he disfigured?"

"Not a disfigurement," returned John, "but the ole governor, he's a right smart sprinklin' of 'em, one squar' on the tip of his nose, and five or six more on his face."

Thus relieved of her immediate fears, Maude asked

many questions concerning Louis, who she learned had not been very sick.

"You can see him afore long I reckon," said John, and in a few days she was able to join him in the sitting room below.

After a little Hannah returned to her post of duty, her beauty unimpaired and herself thoroughly ashamed of having thus heartlessly deserted her master's family in their affliction. As if to make amends for this she exerted herself to cleanse the house from every thing which could possibly inspire fear on the villagers, and by the last of August, there was scarce a trace left of the recent scourge, save the deep scar on the end of the doctor's nose, one or two marks on Louis's face, and a weakness of Maude's eyes, which became at last a cause of serious alarm.

It was in vain that Louis implored his father to seek medical aid in Rochester, where the physicians were supposed to have more experience in such matters. The doctor refused, saying, "'twas a maxim of his not to counsel with any one, and he guessed he knew how to manage sore eyes."

But Maude's eyes were not sore—they were merely weak, while the pain in the eyeball was sometimes so intense as to wring from her a cry of suffering. Gradually there crept into her heart a horrid fear that her sight was growing dim, and often in the darkness of the night she wept most bitterly, praying that she might not be blind.

"Oh, Louis," she said to her brother one day, "I would so much rather die than to be blind, and never see you any more—never see the beautiful world I love so much. Oh, must it be? Is there no help?"

"James De Vere could help us if he were here, answered Louis, his own tears mingling with his sister's.

But James De Vere had left Hampton for New Orleans, where he would probably remain until the winter, and there could be no aid expected from him. The doctor too, was wholly absorbed in thoughts of his approaching nuptials, for Maude Glendower, failing to secure the wealthy bachelor, and overhearing several times the remark that she was really getting old, had consented to name the 20th of October for their marriage. And so the other Maude was left to battle with the terrible fear which was strengthened every day.

At length J. C. roused not so much by the touching letter which she wrote him, as by the uncertain handwriting, came himself, bringing with him a physician, who carefully examined the soft black eyes, which could not now endure the light, then shaking his head, he said gravely, "There is still some hope, but she must go to the city, where I can see her every day."

J. C. looked at Dr. Kennedy, and Dr. Kennedy looked at J. C., and then both their hands sought their pockets, but came out again—*empty*! J. C. really had not the ready means with which to meet the expense, while Dr. Kennedy had not the inclination. But one there was, the faithful John, who could not stand by unmoved, and darting from the room, he mounted the woodshed stairs, and from beneath the rafters drew out an old leathern wallet, where, from time to time, he had deposited money for "the wet day." That wet day had come at last—not to him, but to another—and without a moment's hesitation, he counted out the ten golden eagles which his purse contained, and, going back to Maude, placed them

in her hand, saying: "Go to Rochester, Miss Maude. I saved 'em for you, for I wouldn't have the light squenched in them shinin' eyes for all the land in old Virginny."

It was a noble act, and it shamed the paler faces who witnessed it, but they offered no remonstrance, though Maude did, refusing to accept it, until Louis said: "Take it, sister—take it, and when I'm twenty-one I'll give to him ten times ten golden eagles."

The necessary arrangements were quickly made, and ere a week was passed, Maude found herself in Rochester, and an inmate of Mrs. Kelsey's family; for, touched with pity, that lady had offered to receive her, and during her brief stay, treated her with every possible attention. Nellie, too, was very kind, ministering carefully to the comfort of her step-sister, who had ceased to be a rival, for well she knew J. C. De Vere would never wed a penniless bride and *blind*!

CHAPTER XV.

THE NEW MISTRESS AT LAUREL HILL.

THE 20th of October came, and with a firm hand Maude Glendower arrayed herself for the bridal, which was to take place at an early hour. The scar on the end of the doctor's nose had shaken her purpose for an instant, but when she thought again of the *unpaid bills* lying in her private drawer, and when, more than all, the doctor said, "We greatly fear Maude Remington will be blind," her resolution was fixed, and with a steady voice she took upon herself the marriage vows. They were to go to Laurel Hill that day, and when the doctor saw that the handsome furniture of her rooms was still untouched, he ventured to ask "if she had left orders to have it sent."

"Oh, I didn't tell you, did I, that my furniture was all mortgaged to Mrs. Raymond for board and borrowed money, too; but of course you don't care; you did not marry my furniture," and the little soft, white hands were laid upon those of the bridegroom, while the lustrous eyes sought his face, to witness the effect of her words.

The *dent* on the nose grew red a moment, and then the doctor, perfectly intoxicated with the beauty of his bride, answered, "No, Maude, I married you."

A rap at the door, and a note from Messrs. Barnabas Muggins and Brown, "hoped Miss Glendower would not forget to settle her bill."

"It's really quite provoking to trouble you with my

debts so soon," said the lady, "but I dare say it's a maxim of yours that we should have no secrets from each other, and so I may as well show you these at once," and she turned into his lap a handful of bills, amounting in all to four hundred dollars, due to the different tradesmen of Troy.

The spot on the nose was decidedly purple, and had Katy or Mattie been there, they would surely have recognized the voice which began, "Really, Mrs. Kennedy, I did not expect this, and 'tis a max—"

"Never mind the maxim," and the mouth of the speaker was covered by a dimpled hand, as Maude Glendower continued, "It's mean, I know, but as true as I live, I don't owe another cent. Four hundred dollars is not much, after all, and you ought to be willing to pay even more for *me*, don't you think so, *dearest*?"

"Ye-es," faintly answered the Doctor, who, knowing there was no alternative, gave a check for the whole amount on a Rochester bank, where he had funds deposited.

Maude Glendower was a charming traveling companion, and in listening to her lively sallies, and noticing the admiration she received, the Doctor forgot his lost four hundred dollars, and by the time they reached Canandaigua, he believed himself supremely happy in having such a wife. John was waiting for them, just as thirteen years before he had waited for blue-eyed Mattie, and the moment her eye fell upon the carriage he had borrowed from a neighbor, the new wife exclaimed "Oh, I hope that lumbering old thing is not ours. It would give me the *ricketts* to ride in it long."

"It's borrowed," the Doctor said, and she continued,

"I'll pick out mine, and my horses, too. I'm quite a connoisseur in those matters."

John rolled his intelligent eyes toward his master, whose face wore a submissive look, never seen there before.

"*Henpecked!*" was the negro's mental comment, as he prepared to start.

When about three miles from the village, the lady started up, saying, "she had left her shawl, and must go back immediately."

"There is not time," said the Doctor, "for the sun is already nearly set. It will be perfectly safe until we send for it."

"But it's my India shawl. I *must* have it," and the lady's hand was laid upon the reins to turn the horses' heads.

Of course they went back, finding the shawl, not at the hotel, but under the carriage cushions, where the lady herself had placed it.

"It's a maxim of mine to know what I'm about," the Doctor ventured to say, while a silvery voice returned, "So do I ordinarily, but it is not strange that I forget myself on my wedding day."

This was well timed, and wrapping the garment carefully round her to shelter her from the night air, the doctor bade the highly amused John drive on. They were more than half way home when some luscious oranges, in a small grocery window, caught the bride's eye, and "she must have some, she always kept them in her room," she said, and to the grocer's inquiry, "How many, madam?" she answered, "Two dozen, at least, and a box of fresh figs, if you have them. I dote on figs."

It was the doctor's wedding day. He could not say no, and with a mental groan he parted company with another bill, while John, on the platform without, danced the "double shuffle" in token of his delight. There was a second grocery to be passed, but by taking a more circuitous route it could be avoided, and the discomfited bridegroom bade John "go through the Hollow."

"Yes, sar," answered the knowing negro, turning the heads of the unwilling horses in a direction which would not bring them home so soon, by one whole hour.

But the grocery was shunned, and so the doctor did not care even if the clock did strike nine just as they stopped at their own gate. The night was dark and the bride could not distinguish the exterior of the house, neither was the interior plainly discernible, lighted as it was with an oil lamp and a single tallow candle. But she scarcely thought of this, so intent was she upon the beautiful face of the crippled boy, who sat in his arm chair, eagerly awaiting her arrival.

"This is Louis," the father said, and the scornful eyes which with one rapid glance had scanned the whole apartment, filled with tears as they turned toward the boy.

Dropping on one knee before him, the lady parted the silken hair from his forehead, saying very gently, "You must be like your mother, save that your eyes are brown, and hers were blue. May I be your mother, Louis? Will you call me so?"

Very wonderingly the child gazed into her face. It was radiantly beautiful, while the dreamy eyes rested upon him with such a yearning look that his heart went out toward her at once, and winding his arms around her

neck, he murmured, "I shall love you very much, my mother."

For a moment Maude Glendower held him to her bosom, while her thoughts went back to the long ago when another face much like his had rested there, and another voice had whispered in her ear, "I love you, Maude Glendower." That voice was hushed in death, but through the child it spoke to her again, and with a throbbing heart she vowed to be to the crippled boy what Mattie herself would well approve, could she speak from her low bed beneath the willows.

"What of your sister?" the lady said at last, rising to her feet. "Is she recovering her sight?"

"Nellie writes there is hope," said Louis, "though she did not receive attention soon enough, the physician says."

There was reproach, contempt, and anger in the large black eyes which sought the doctor's face, but the tallow candle burned but dim, and so he did not see it.

"It will be a great misfortune to her, and very hard on me if she is blind, for of course I must take care of her," he said at last, while his wife indignantly replied, "Take care of her! Yes, I'd sell my diamonds rather than see her suffer!"

Supper was now announced, and in examining the arrangement of the table, and inspecting the furniture of the dining-room, the bride forgot every thing save the novelty of her situation. Mentally styling the house "an old rookery," she forced back the bitter feelings which would rise up when she thought how unlike was all this to what she had been accustomed. It needed but one glance of her keen eyes to read the whole, and ere the close of the next day, she understood her position per-

fectly, and summoning to her aid her *iron will*, she determined to make the most of every thing. She knew the doctor had money, aye, and she knew, too, how to get it from him, but she was too wary to undertake it in any of the ordinary ways. She did not tell him how desolate the old house seemed, or that she was home-sick because of its desolation; but after she had been there a few days, she sat down by his side, and told him that with a few improvements it could be made the most delightful spot in all the country, and she was glad she had come there to help him to fix it up. She knew he had exquisite taste, and, as he was now at leisure, they would contrive together how their parlors could be improved. She didn't quite like them as they were, the window lights were too small, and they must have the large panes of glass. Then satin paper on the walls would look so much better, and the carpets, though really very nice, were hardly good enough for a man of Dr. Kennedy's standing in society.

"But," gasped the doctor, "the one in the back parlor is bran new—has scarcely been used at all, and it is a maxim of mine"—

"Your *maxim* is good, undoubtedly," interrupted the lady, "but the chambers all need recarpeting, and this will exactly fit Maude's room, which I intend fixing beautifully before she returns."

The doctor looked aghast, and his wife continued: "The season is so far advanced that it is hardly worth while to make any changes now, but next spring I shall coax you into all manner of repairs. I do wonder what makes that spot on your nose so red at times. You are really very fine looking when it is not there. It is gone," she con-

tinued, and, smoothing away a wrinkle in his forehead, she said, "We won't talk of the future now, but seriously, we must have some new Brussels carpets, and a furnace to warm the whole house."

Here she shivered and coughed quite naturally, after which she returned to the charge, saying, "her family were consumptive, and she could not endure the cold."

"But, my dear," said the doctor, "it will cost a great deal of money to carry out your plans."

"Oh, no, not much," she answered, "give me five hundred dollars and I will do every thing that is necessary to make us comfortable through the winter."

"Five hundred dollars, Mrs. Kennedy!" and the doctors gray eyes looked as they used to look when Katy and Mattie asked him for five. "Five hundred dollars! Preposterous! Why, during the seven years I lived with your predecessor, she did not cost me that!"

From old Hannah, Mrs. Kennedy had learned how her predecessor had been stinted by the doctor, and could he that moment have looked into her heart, he would have seen there a fierce determination to avenge the wrongs so meekly borne. But she did not embody her thoughts in words, neither did she deem it advisable to press the subject further at that time, so she waited for nearly a week, and then resumed the attack with redoubled zeal.

"We *must* have another servant," she said. "Old Hannah is wholly inefficient, and so I have engaged a colored woman from the hotel; and did I tell you, I have spoken to a man about the furnace we are going to have, and I also told Mr. Jenks to buy me one hundred yards of Brussels carpeting, in New York. He's gone for goods, you know."

"Really, Mrs. Kennedy, this exceeds all. My former companions saw fit to consult me always. Really, one hundred yards of carpeting, and a black cook! Astonishing, Mrs. Kennedy—astonishing!"

The doctor was quite too much confounded to think of a single maxim, for his wife's effrontery took him wholly by surprise. She was a most energetic woman, and her proceedings were already the theme of many a tea-table gossip, in which the delighted villagers exulted that Dr. Kennedy had at last found his match. Yes, he had found his match, and when next day the *black* cook, Rose, came, and Mr. Brown asked when he would have the furnace put in his cellar, there was that in the eye of his better half, which prompted a meek submission. When the bill for the new carpets was handed him he again rebelled but all to no purpose. He paid the requisite amount, and tried to swallow his wrath with his wife's consolatory remark, that "they were the handsomest couple in town, and ought to have the handsomest carpets!"

One day he found her giving directions to two or three men who were papering, painting, and whitewashing Maude's room, and then, as John remarked, he seemed more like himself than he had done before since his last marriage.

"If Maude is going to be blind," he said, "it can make no difference with her how her chamber looks, and 'tis a maxim of mine to let well enough alone."

"I wish you would cure yourself of those disagreeable maxims," was the lady's cool reply, as, stepping to the head of the stairs, she bade John "bring up the carpet, if it were whipped enough."

"Allow me to ask what you are going to do with it?"

said the doctor, as from the windows he saw the back parlor carpet swinging on the line.

"Why, I told you I was going to fit up Maude's room. She is coming home in a week, you know, and I am preparing a surprise. I have ordered a few pieces of light furniture from the cabinet-maker's, and I think her chamber would look nicely if the walls were only a little higher. They can't be raised, I suppose?"

She was perfectly collected, and no queen on her throne ever issued her orders with greater confidence in their being obeyed; and when, that night, she said to her husband, "These men must have their pay," he had no alternative but to open his purse and give her what she asked. Thus it was with every thing. Hers was the ruling spirit, and struggle as he would, the doctor was always compelled to submit.

"Ki, aint him cotechin' it good?" was John's mental comment, as he daily watched the proceedings, and while Hannah pronounced him "the *hen-peck-ed-est* man she had ever seen," the amused villagers knew that *will* had met *will*, and been conquered!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BLIND GIRL.

MAUDE's chamber was ready at last, and very inviting it looked with its coat of fresh paint, its cheerful paper, bright carpet, handsome bedstead, marble washstand, and mahogany bureau, on which were arranged various little articles for the toilet. The few pieces of furniture which Mrs. Kennedy had ordered from the cabinet-maker's had amounted, in all, to nearly *one hundred dollars*, but the bill was not yet sent in, and, in blissful ignorance of the surprise awaiting him, the doctor rubbed his hands and tried to seem pleased, when his wife, passing her arm in his, led him to the room, which she compelled him to admire.

"It was all very nice," he said, "but wholly unnecessary for a blind girl. What was the price of this?" he asked, laying his hand upon the bedstead.

"Only *twenty-five dollars*. Wasn't it cheap?" and the wicked black eyes danced with merriment at the loud groan which succeeded the answer.

"*Twenty-five dollars!*" he exclaimed. "Why, the bedstead Mattie and I slept on for seven years only cost three, and it is now as good as new."

"But times have changed," said the lady. "Every body has nicer things; besides, do you know people used to talk dreadfully about a man of your standing being so stingy. But I have done considerable toward correcting

that impression. You aint stingy, and in proof of it, you'll give me fifty cents to buy cologne for this." And she took up a beautiful bottle which stood upon the bureau.

The doctor had not fifty cents in change, but a dollar bill would suit her exactly as well, she said, and secretly exulting in her mastery over the self-willed tyrant, she suffered him to depart, saying to himself, as he descended the stair, "Twenty-five dollars for *one* bedstead. I *won't* stand it! I'll do something!"

"What are you saying, dear?" a melodious voice called after him, and so accelerated his movements that the extremity of his coat disappeared from view, just as the lady Maude reached the head of the stairs.

"Oh!" was the involuntary exclamation of Louis, who had been a spectator of the scene, and who felt intuitively that his father had found his mistress.

During her few weeks residence at Laurel Hill, Maude Glendower had bound the crippled boy to herself by many a deed of love, and whatever she did was sure of meeting his approval. With him she had consulted concerning his sister's room, yielding often to his artist taste in the arrangement of the furniture, and now that the chamber was ready, they both awaited impatiently the arrival of its occupant. Nellie's last letter had been rather encouraging, and Maude herself had appended her name at its close. The writing was tremulous and uncertain, but it brought hope to the heart of the brother, who had never really believed it possible for his sister to be blind. Very restless he seemed on the day when she was expected, and when, just as the sun was setting, the carriage drove to the gate, a faint sickness crept over him, and wheeling his chair to the window of her room, he looked anxiously at

her, as with John's assistance, she alighted from the carriage.

"If she walks alone, I shall know she is not very blind," he said, and with clasped hands he watched her intently as she came slowly toward the house with Nellie a little in advance.

Nearer and nearer she came—closer and closer the burning forehead was pressed against the window-pane, and hope beat high in Louis's heart, when suddenly she turned aside—her foot rested on the withered violets which grew outside the walk, and her hand groped in the empty air.

"She's blind—she's blind," said Louis, and with a moaning cry, he laid his head upon the broad arm of his chair, sobbing most bitterly.

Meantime below there was a strange interview between the new mother and her children, Maude Glendower clasping her namesake in her arms, and weeping over her as she had never wept before but once, and that when the moonlight shone upon her sitting by a distant grave. Pushing back the clustering curls, she kissed the open brow and looked into the soft black eyes with a burning gaze, which penetrated the shadowy darkness and brought a flush to the cheek of the young girl.

"Maude Remington! Maude Remington!" she said, dwelling long upon the latter name, "the sight of you affects me painfully, you are so like one I have lost. I shall love you, Maude Remington, for the sake of the dead, and you, too, must love me, and call me mother—will you?" and her lips again touched those of the astonished maiden.

Though fading fast, the light was not yet quenched in Maude's eyes, and very wistfully she scanned the face of

the speaker, while her hands moved caressingly over each feature, as she said, "I will love you, beautiful lady, though you can never be to me what my gentle mother was."

At the sound of that voice, Maude Glendower started suddenly, and turning aside, so her words could not be heard, she murmured sadly, "Both father and child prefer *her* to *me*,"—then recollecting herself, she offered her hand to the wondering Nellie, saying, "Your sister's misfortune must be my excuse for devoting so much time to her, when you, as my eldest daughter, were entitled to my first attention."

Her step-mother's evident preference for Maude had greatly offended the selfish Nellie, who coldly answered, "Don't trouble yourself, madam. It's not of the least consequence. But where is my father? He will welcome me, I am sure."

The feeling too often existing between step-mothers and step-daughters had sprung into life, and henceforth the intercourse of Maude Glendower and Nellie Kennedy would be marked with studied politeness, and nothing more. But the former did not care. So long as her eye could feast itself upon the face and form of Maude Remington, she was content, and as Nellie left the room, she wound her arm around the comparatively helpless girl, saying, "Let me take you to your brother."

Although unwilling, usually, to be led, Maude yielded now, and suffered herself to be conducted to the chamber where Louis watched for her coming. She could see enough to know there was a change, and clasping her companion's hand, she said, "I am surely indebted to you for this surprise."

"Maude, Maude!" and the tones of Louis' voice trembled with joy, as stretching his arms toward her, he cried, "You *can* see."

Guided more by the sound than by actual vision, Maude flew like lightning to his side, and kneeling before him, hid her face in his lap, while he bent fondly over her, beseeching her to say if she could see. It was a most touching sight, and drawing near, Maude Glendower mingled her tears with those of the unfortunate children, on whom affliction had laid her heavy hand.

Maude Remington was naturally of a hopeful nature, and though she had passed through many an hour of anguish, and had rebelled against the fearful doom which seemed to be approaching, she did not yet despair. She still saw a little—could discern colors and forms, and could tell one person from another.

"I shall be better by and by," she said, when assured by the sound of retreating footsteps that they were alone. "I am following implicitly the doctor's directions, and I hope to see by Christmas—but if I do not"—

Here she broke down entirely, and wringing her hands she cried, "Oh, brother,—brother, must I be blind? I can't—I can't, for who will care for poor, blind, helpless Maude?"

"I, sister, I," and hushing his own great sorrow, the crippled boy comforted the weeping girl just as she had once comforted him, when in the quiet grave-yard he had lain him down in the long, rank grass, and wished that he might die. "Pa's new wife will care for you, too," he said. "She's a beautiful woman, Maude, and a good one, I am sure, for she cried so hard over mother's grave, and her voice was so gentle when, just as though she had

known our mother, she said, "Darling Matty, I *will* be kind to your children."

"Ah, that I will—I will," came faintly from the hall without, where Maude Glendower stood, her eyes riveted upon the upturned face of Maude, and her whole body swelling with emotion.

A sad heritage had been bequeathed to her—a crippled boy and a weak, blind girl—but in some respects she was a noble woman, and as she gazed upon the two, she resolved that so long as she should live, so long should the helpless children of Matty Remington have a steadfast friend. Hearing her husband's voice below, she glided down the stairs, leaving Louis and Maude really alone.

"Sister," said Louis, after a moment, "what of Mr. De Vere? Is he true to the last?"

"I have released him," answered Maude. "I am nothing to him now," and very calmly she proceeded to tell him of the night when she had said to Mr. De Vere, "My money is gone—my sight is going too, and I give you back your troth, making you free to marry another, Nellie, if you choose. She is better suited to you than I have ever been."

Though secretly pleased at her offering to give him up, J. C. made a show of resistance, but she had prevailed at last, and with the assurance that he should always esteem her highly, he consented to the breaking of the engagement, and the very next afternoon, rode out with Nellie Kennedy.

"He will marry her, I think," Maude said, as she finished narrating the circumstances, and looking into her calm, unruffled face, Louis felt sure that she had outlived

her love for one who had proved himself as fickle as J. C. De Vere.

"And what of James?" he asked. "Is he still in New Orleans?"

"He is," answered Maude. "He has a large wholesale establishment there, and as one of the partners is sick, he has taken his place for the winter. He wrote to his cousin often, bidding him spare no expense for me, and offering to pay the bills if J. C. was not able."

Awhile longer they conversed, and then they were summoned to supper, Mrs. Kennedy coming herself for Maude, who did not refuse to be assisted by her.

"The wind hurt my eyes—they will be better to-morrow," she said, and, with her old sunny smile, she greeted her step-father, and then turned to Hannah and John, who had come in to see her.

But alas for the delusion! The morrow brought no improvement, neither the next day, nor the next, and as the world grew dim, there crept into her heart a sense of utter desolation, which neither the tender love of Maude Glendower, nor yet the untiring devotion of Louis, could in any degree dispel. All day would she sit opposite the window, her eyes fixed on the light with a longing, eager gaze, as if she feared that the next moment it might leave her forever. Whatever he could do for her Louis did, going to her room each morning, and arranging her dress and hair just as he knew she used to wear it. She would not suffer any one else to do this for her, and in performing these little offices, Louis felt that he was only repaying her in part for all she had done for him.

Christmas eve came at last, and if she thought of what was once to have been on the morrow, she gave no out-

ward token, and, with her accustomed smile, bade the family good night. The next morning Louis went often to her door, and, hearing no sound within, fancied she was sleeping, until at last, as the clock struck nine, he ventured to go in. Maude was awake, and advancing to her side, he bade her a "Merry Christmas," playfully chiding her the while for having slept so late. A wild, started expression flashed over her face, as she said: "*Late, Louis! Is it morning, then? I've watched so long to see the light?*"

Louis did not understand her, and he answered, "*Morning, yes. The sunshine is streaming into the room. Don't you see it?*"

"*Sunshine!*" and Maude's lips quivered with fear, as springing from her pillow, she whispered faintly, "Lead me to the window."

He complied with her request, watching her curiously, as she laid both hands in the warm sunshine, which bathed her fair, round arms, and shone upon her raven hair. She *felt* what she could not *see*, and Louis Kennedy ne'er forgot the agonized expression of the white, beautiful face, which turned toward him, as the wretched Maude moaned piteously, "Yes, brother, 'tis morning to you, but dark, dark night to me. "*I'm blind! oh, I'm blind!*"

She did not faint, she did not shriek, but she stood there rigid and immovable, her countenance giving fearful token of the terrible storm within. She was battling fiercely with her fate, and until twice repeated, she did not hear the childish voice which said to her pleadingly, "Don't look so, sister. You frighten me, and there may be some hope yet."

"Hope," she repeated bitterly, turning her sightless eyes toward him, "There is no hope but death."

"Maude," and Louis's voice was like a plaintive harp, so mournful was its tone, "Maude, once in the very spot where mother is lying now, you said, because I was a cripple, you would love me all the more. You have kept that promise well, my sister. You have been all the world to me, and now that you are blind, I, too, will love you more. I will be your light—your eyes, and when James De Vere comes back"—

"No, no, no," moaned Maude, sinking upon the floor "Nobody will care for me. Nobody will love a blind girl; oh, is it wicked to wish that I could die, lying here in the sunshine, which I shall never see again?"

There was a movement at the door, and Mrs. Kennedy appeared, starting back as her eye fell upon the face of the prostrate girl, who recognized her step, and murmured sadly, "Mother, I'm blind, wholly blind."

Louis's grief had been too great for tears, but Maude Glendower's flowed at once, and bending over the white-faced girl, she strove to comfort her, telling her how she would always love her, that every wish should be gratified.

"Then give me back my sight, oh, give me back my sight," and Maude clasped her mother's hands imploringly.

Ere long she grew more calm, and suffered herself to be dressed as usual, but she would not admit any one to her room, neither on that day nor for many succeeding days. At length, however, this feeling wore away, and in the heartfelt sympathy of her family and friends, she found a slight balm for her grief. Even the Doctor was softened, and when Messrs. Beebe & Co. sent in a bill of ninety-five dollars for various articles of furniture, the

frown upon his face gave way when his wife said to him, "It was for Maude, you know, *poor Maude!*"

"Poor Maude!" seemed to be the sentiment of the whole household, and Nellie herself said it many a time, as with unwonted tenderness she caressed the unfortunate girl, fearing the while lest she had done her a wrong, for she did not then understand the nature of Maude's feelings for J. C. De Vere, to whom Nellie was now engaged.

Urged on by Mrs. Kelsey, and a fast diminishing income, J. C. had written to Nellie soon after her return to Laurel Hill, asking her to be his wife. He did not disguise his former love for Maude, neither did he pretend to have outlived it, but he said he could not wed a blind girl. And Nellie, forgetting her assertion that she would never marry one who had first proposed to Maude, was only too much pleased to answer *Yes*. And when J. C. insisted upon an early day, she named the fifth of March, her twentieth birthday. She was to be married at home, and as the preparations for the wedding would cause a great amount of bustle and confusion in the house, it seemed necessary that Maude should know the cause, and with a beating heart Nellie went to her one day to tell the news. Very composedly Maude listened to the story, and then as composedly replied, "I am truly glad, and trust you will be happy."

"So I should be," answered Nellie, "if I were sure you did not care."

"Care! for whom?" returned Maude. "For J. C. De Vere? Every particle of love for him has died out, and I am now inclined to think I never entertained for him more than a girlish fancy, while he certainly did not truly care for me."

This answer was very quieting to Nellie's conscience, and in unusually good spirits she abandoned herself to the excitement which usually precedes a wedding. Mrs. Kennedy, too, entered heart and soul into the matter, and arming herself with the plea, that "it was his only daughter, who would probably never be married again," she coaxed her husband into all manner of extravagances, and by the first of March, few would have recognized the interior of the house, so changed was it by furniture and repairs. Handsome damask curtains shaded the parlor windows, which were further improved by large heavy panes of glass. Mattie's piano had been removed to Maude's chamber, and its place supplied by a new and costly instrument, which the crafty woman made her husband believe was intended by Mrs. Kelsey who selected it as a bridal present for her niece. The furnace was in splendid order, keeping the whole house, as Hannah said, "hotter than an oven," while the disturbed doctor lamented daily over the amount of fuel it consumed, and nightly counted the contents of his purse, or reckoned up how much he was probably worth. But neither his remonstrances nor yet his frequent groans, had any effect upon his wife. Although she had no love for Nellie, she was determined upon a splendid wedding, one which would make folks talk for months, and when her liege lord complained of the confusion, she suggested to him a furnished room in the garret, where it would be very quiet for him to reckon up the bills, which from time to time she brought him.

"Might as well gin in at oncet," John said to him one day, when he borrowed ten dollars for the payment of an oyster bill. "I tell you she's got more besom in her than both them t'other ones."

The doctor probably thought so too, for he became comparatively submissive, though he visited often the sunken graves, where he found a mournful solace in reading "Katy, wife of Dr. Kennedy, aged twenty-nine,"—"Matty, second wife of Dr. Kennedy, aged thirty," and once he was absolutely guilty of wondering how the words "Maude, third wife of Dr. Kennedy, aged 41," would look. But he repented him of the wicked thought, and when on his return from his "grave-yard musings," Maude, aged 41 asked him for the twenty dollars which she saw a man pay to him that morning, he gave it to her without a word.

Meanwhile the fickle J. C. in Rochester, was one moment regretting the step he was about to take, and the next wishing the day would hasten, so he could "have it over with." Maude Remington had secured a place in his affections which Nellie could not fill, and though he had no wish to marry her now, he tried to make himself believe that but for her misfortune, she should still have become his wife.

"*Jim* would marry her, I dare say, even if she were blind as a bat," he said, "but then he is able to support her," and reminded by this of an unanswered letter from his cousin, who was still in New Orleans, he sat down and wrote, telling him of Maude's total blindness, and then, almost in the next sentence saying that his wedding was fixed for the fifth of March. "There he exclaimed, as he read over the letter, 'I believe I must be crazy, for I never told him that the bride was *Nellie*, but no matter, I'd like to have him think me magnanimous for a while, and I want to hear what he says.'"

Two weeks or more went by, and then there came an

answer, fraught with sympathy for Maude, and full of commendation for J. C., who "had shown himself a *man*."

Accompanying the letter was a box containing a most exquisite set of pearls for the bride, together with a diamond ring, on which was inscribed, "Cousin Maude."

"Ain't I in a deuced scrape," said J. C., as he examined the beautiful ornaments, "Nellie would be delighted with them, but she shan't have them, they are not hers. I'll write to Jim at once, and tell him the mistake," and seizing his pen, he dashed off a few lines, little guessing how much happiness they would carry to the far off city, where daily and nightly James De Vere fought manfully with the love that clung with a deathlike grasp to the girl J. C. had forsaken, the poor, blind, helpless Maude.

CHAPTER XVII.

NELLIE'S BRIDAL NIGHT.

THE blind girl sat alone in her chamber, listening to the sound of merry voices in the hall without, or the pattering of feet, as the fast arriving guests tripped up and down the stairs. She had heard the voice of J. C. De Vere as he passed her door, but it awoke within her bosom no lingering regret, and when an hour later, Nellie stood before her, arrayed in her bridal robes, she passed her hand caressingly over the flowing curls, the fair, round face, the satin dress, and streaming veil, saying as she did so, "I know you are beautiful, my sister, and if a blind girl's blessing can be of any avail, you have it most cordially."

Both Mrs. Kennedy and Nellie had urged Maude to be present at the ceremony, but she shrank from the gaze of strangers, and preferred remaining in her room, an arrangement quite satisfactory to J. C., who did not care to meet her then. It seemed probable that some of the guests would go up to see her, and knowing this, Mrs. Kennedy had arranged her curls and dress with unusual care, saying to her as she kissed her pale cheek, "You are far more beautiful than the bride."

And Maude was beautiful. Recent suffering and non-exposure to the open air had imparted a delicacy to her

complexion, which harmonized well with the mournful expression of her face, and the idea of touching helplessness which her presence inspired. Her long, fringed eyelashes rested upon her cheek, and her short, glossy curls were never more becomingly arranged than now, when stepping backward a pace or two, Mrs. Kennedy stopped a moment to admire her again, ere going below where her presence was already needed.

* * * * *

The din of voices grew louder in the hall, there was a tread of many feet upon the stairs, succeeded by a solemn hush, and Maude, listening to every sound, knew that the man to whom she had been plighted, was giving to another his marriage vow. She had no love for J. C. De Vere, but as she sat there alone in her desolation, and thoughts of her sister's happiness rose up in contrast to her own dark, hopeless lot, who shall blame her if she covered her face with her hands, and wept most bitterly. Poor Maude! It was dark, dark night within, and dark, dark night without; and her dim eye could not penetrate the gloom, nor see the star which hung o'er the brow of the distant hill, where a way-worn man was toiling on. Days and nights had he traveled, unmindful of fatigue, while his throbbing heart outstript the steam-god by many a mile.

The letter had fulfilled its mission, and with one wild burst of joy when he read that *she was free*, he started for the north. He was not expected at the wedding, but it would be a glad surprise, he knew, and he pressed untiringly on, thinking but one thought, and that, how he would comfort the poor, blind Maude. He did not know that even then her love belonged to him, but he could win

it, perhaps, and then away to sunny France, where many a wonderful cure had been wrought, and might be wrought again.

* * * * *

The bridal was over, and the congratulations nearly so, when a stranger was announced, an uninvited guest, and from his arm chair in the corner, Louis saw that it was the same kind face which had bent so fearlessly over his pillow little more than six months before. *James De Vere*—the name was echoed from lip to lip, but did not penetrate the silent chamber where Maude sat weeping yet.

A rapid glance through the rooms assured the young man that she was not there: and when the summons to supper was given, he went to Louis and asked him for his sister.

"She is up-stairs," said Louis, adding impulsively, "She will be glad you have come, for she has talked of you so much."

"Talked of *me*!" and the eyes of James De Vere looked earnestly into Louis's face. "And does she talk of me still?"

"Yes," said Louis, "I heard her once when she was asleep, though I ought not to have mentioned it," he continued, suddenly recollecting himself, "for when I told her, she blushed so red, and bade me not to tell."

"Take me to her, will you?" said Mr. De Vere, and following his guide, he was soon opposite the door of Maude's room.

"Wait a moment," he exclaimed, passing his fingers through his hair, and trying in vain to brush from his coat the dust which had settled there.

"It don't matter, for she can't see," said Louis, who comprehended at once the feelings of his companion.

By this time they stood within the chamber, but so absorbed was Maude in her own grief, that she did not hear her brother, until he bent over her and whispered in her ear, "Wake, sister, if you're sleeping. *He's come. He's here!*"

She had no need to ask of him who had come. She knew intuitively, and starting up, her unclosed eyes flashed eagerly around the room, turning at last toward the door where she felt that he was standing. James De Vere remained motionless, watching intently the fair, troubled face, which had never seemed so fair to him before.

"Brother, have you deceived me? Where is he?" she said at last, as her listening ear caught no new sound.

"Here, Maude, here," and gliding to her side, Mr. De Vere wound his arm around her, and kissing her lips, called her by the name to which she was getting accustomed, and which never sounded so soothingly as when breathed by his melodious voice. "My poor, blind Maude," was all he said, but by the clasp of his warm hand, by the tear she felt upon her cheek, and by his very silence she knew how deeply he sympathized with her.

Knowing that they would rather be alone, Louis went below, where many inquiries were making for the guest who had so suddenly disappeared. The interview between the two was short, for some of Maude's acquaintance came up to see her, but it sufficed for Mr. De Vere to learn all that he cared particularly to know then. Maude did not love J. C., whose marriage with another caused her no regret, and this knowledge made the future seem hopeful and bright. It was not the time to speak of that future to her, but he

bade her take courage, hinting that his purse should never be closed until every possible means had been used for the restoration of her sight. What wonder then, if she dreamed that night that she could see again, and that the good angel by whose agency this blessing had been restored to her, was none other than James De Vere.

CHAPTER XVIII.

COUSIN MAUDE.

THREE days had passed since the bridal, and James still lingered at Laurel Hill, while not very many miles away his mother waited and wondered why he did not come. J. C. and Nellie were gone, but ere they had left, the former sought an interview with Maude, whose placid brow he kissed tenderly, as he whispered in her ear: "Fate decreed that you should not be my wife, but I have made you my sister, and, if I mistake not, another wishes to make you my cousin."

To James he had given back the ornaments intended for another bride than Nellie, saying, as he did so, "*Maude De Vere* may wear them yet."

"What do you mean?" asked James, and J. C. replied: "I mean that *I* and not you will have a *Cousin Maude*."

"Who might have been your wife?" queried James.

"No," J. C. answered mournfully, "not my wife, even if she were not blind. I never satisfied her, and she did not love me as I know she can love you, who are far more worthy of her. God bless you both," and with a sigh to the memory of what he once hoped would be, J. C. went from his cousin to his bride, who petulantly chided him for having staid so long away.

Two days had elapsed since then, and it was night again—but to the blind girl, drinking in the words of

love, which fell like music on her ear, it was nigh noon-day, and the sky undimmed by a single cloud.

"I once called you my cousin, Maude," the deep-toned voice said, "and I thought it the sweetest name I had ever heard, but there is a nearer, dearer name which I would give to you, even my wife—Maude—shall it be?" and he looked into her sightless eyes to read her answer.

She had listened eagerly to the story of his love born so long ago—had held her breath lest she should lose a single word when he told her how he had battled with that love, and how his heart had thrilled with joy when he heard that she was free—but when he asked her to be his wife, the bright vision faded, and she answered mournfully, "You know not what you say. You would not take a blind girl in her helplessness."

"A thousand-fold dearer to me for that very helplessness," he said, and then he told her of the land beyond the sea, where the physicians were well skilled in everything pertaining to the eye. "Hither they would go," he said, "when the April winds were blowing, and should the experiment not succeed, he would love and cherish her all the more."

Maude knew he was in earnest, and was about to answer him, when along the hall there came the sound of little crutches, and over her face there flitted a shadow of pain. It was the sister-love warring with the love of self, but James De Vere understood it all, and he hastened to say, "Louis will go, too, my darling. I have never had a thought of separating you. In Europe he will have a rare opportunity for developing his taste. Shall it not be so?"

"Let him decide," was Maude's answer, as the crutches struck the soft carpet of the room.

"Louis," said Mr. De Vere, "shall Maude go with me to Europe as my wife?"

"Yes, yes—yes, yes," was Louis' hasty answer, his brown eyes filling with tears of joy, when he heard that he, too, was to accompany them.

Maude could no longer refuse, and she half fancied she saw the flashing of the diamonds, when James placed upon her finger the ring, which bore the inscription of "Cousin Maude." Before coming there that night, Mr. De Vere had consulted a New York paper, and found that a steamship would sail for Liverpool on the 20th of April, about six weeks from that day.

"We will go in it," he said, "my blind bird, Louis and I," and he parted lovingly the silken tresses of her to whom this new appellation was given.

There was much in the future to anticipate, and much in the past which he wished to talk over; so he stayed with her late that night, and on passing through the lower hall was greatly surprised to see Mrs. Kennedy still sitting in the parlor. She had divined the object and result of his visit, and the moment he was gone, she glided up the stairs to the room where Maude was quietly weeping for very joy. The story of the engagement was soon told, and winding her arm around Maude's neck, Mrs. Kennedy said, "I rejoice with you, daughter, in your happiness, but I shall be left so desolate when you and Louis are both gone."

Just then her eye caught the ring upon Maude's finger, and taking it in her hand, she admired its chaste beauty, and was calculating its probable cost, when glancing at

the inside, she started suddenly, exclaiming, "*Cousin Maude*"—that is my name—the one by which he always called me. Has it been given to you, too?" and as the throng of memories that name awakened came rushing over her, the impulsive woman folded the blind girl to her bosom, saying to her, "My child, my child, you should have been!"

"I do not understand you," said Maude, and Mrs. Kennedy replied, "It is not meet that we should part ere I tell you who and what I am. Is the name of Maude Glendower strange to you? Did you never hear it in your Vernon home?"

"It seemed familiar to me when J. C. De Vere first told me of you," answered Maude, but I cannot recall any particular time when I heard it spoken. Did you know my mother?"

"Yes, father and mother both, and loved them, too. Listen to me, Maude, while I tell you of the past. Though it seems so long ago, I was a school-girl once, and nightly in my arms there slept a fair-haired, blue-eyed maiden, four years my junior, over whom I exercised an elder sister's care. She loved me—this little blue-eyed girl—and when your brother first spoke to me, I seemed again to hear her voice whispering in my ear, 'I love you, beautiful Maude.'"

"It was mother—it was mother!" and Maude Remington drew nearer to the excited woman, who answered,

"Yes, it was your mother, then little Mattie Reed; we were at school together in New Haven, and she was my roommate. We were not at all alike, for I was wholly selfish, while she found her greatest pleasure in minister-

ing to other's happiness; but she crossed my path at last, and then I thought I hated her."

"Not my mother, lady. You could not hate my mother;" and the blind eyes flashed as if they would tear away the veil of darkness in which they were enshrouded, and gaze upon a woman who could hate sweet Mattie Remington.

"Hush, child, don't look so fiercely at me," said Maude Glendower. "Upon your mother's grave I have wept that sin away, and I know I am forgiven as well as if her own soft voice had told me so. I loved your father, Maude, and this was my great error. He was a distant relative of your mother, whom he always called his cousin. He visited her often, for he was a college student, and ere I was aware of it, I loved him, oh, so madly, vainly fancying my affection was returned. He was bashful, I thought, for he was not then twenty-one, and by way of rousing him to action, I trifled with another—with *Dr. Kennedy*, and she uttered the name spitefully, as if it were even now hateful to her.

"I know it—I know it," returned Maude, "he told me that when he first talked with me of you, but I did not suppose the dark-eyed student was my father."

"It was none other," said Mrs. Kennedy, "and you can form some conception of my love for him, when I tell you that it has never died away, but is as fresh within my heart this night, as when I walked with him upon the College Green, and he called me 'Cousin Maude,' for he gave me that name because of my fondness for Mattie, and he sealed it with a kiss. Mattie was present at that time, and had I not been blind, I should have seen how his whole soul was bound up in her, even while kissing me. I re-

garded her as a child, and so she was, but men sometimes love children, you know. When she was fifteen, she left New Haven. I, too, had ceased to be a school-girl, but I still remained in the city and wrote to her regularly, until at last, your father came to me, and with the light of a great joy shining all over his face, told me she was to be his bride on her sixteenth birthday. She would have written it herself, he said, only she was a bashful little creature, and would rather he should tell me. I know not what I did for the blow was sudden, and took my senses away. He had been so kind to me of late—had visited me so often that my heart was full of hope. But it was all gone now. Mattie Reed was preferred to me, and while my Spanish blood boiled at the fancied indignity, I said many a harsh thing of her—I called her designing, deceitful, and false; and then in my frenzy quitted the room. I never saw Harry again, for he left the city next morning; but to my dying hour, I shall not forget the expression of his face, when I talked to him of Mattie. Turn away, Maude, turn away! for there is the same look now upon your face. But I have repented of that act, though not till years after. I tore up Mattie's letters. I said I would burn the soft brown tress—"

"Oh, woman, woman! you did not burn my mother's hair!" and with a shudder Maude unwound the arm which so closely encircled her.

"No, Maude, no. I couldn't. It would not leave my fingers, but coiled around them with a loving grasp. I have it now, and esteem it my choicest treasure. When I heard that you were born, my heart softened toward the young girl. Mother and I wrote, asking that Harry's child might be called for me. I did not disguise my love

for him, and I said it would be some consolation to know that his daughter bore my name. My letter did not reach them until you had been baptized Matilda, which was the name of your mother and grandmother, but, to prove their goodness, they ever after called you *Maude*."

"Then I *was* named for you," and Maude Remington came back to the embrace of Maude Glendower, who, kissing her white brow, continued: "Two years afterward I found myself in Vernon, stopping for a night at the hotel. "I will see them in the morning," I said—"Harry, Mattie, and the little child;" and I asked the landlord where you lived. I was standing upon the stairs, and in the partial darkness he could not see my anguish, when he replied, "Bless you, miss. Harry Remington died a fortnight ago."

"How I reached my room I never knew, but reach it I did, and half an hour later I knelt by his grave, where I wept away every womanly feeling of my heart, and then went back to the giddy world, the gayest of the gay. I did not seek an interview with your mother, though I have often regretted it since. Did she never speak of me? Think. Did you never hear my name?"

"In Vernon, I am sure I did," answered Maude, "but I was then too young to receive a very vivid impression, and after we came here, mother, I fear, was too unhappy to talk much of the past."

"I understand it," answered Maude Glendower, and over her fine features there stole a hard, dark look, as she continued, "I can see how one of her gentle nature would wither and die in this atmosphere, and forgive me, Maude, she never loved your father as I loved him, for had he called me wife, I should never have been *here*."

"What made you come?" asked Maude; and the lady answered, "For Louis's sake and yours I came. I never lost sight of your mother. I knew she married the man I rejected, and from my inmost soul I pitied her. But I am redressing her wrongs and those of that other woman, who wore her life away within these gloomy walls. *Money* is his idol, and when you touch his purse you touch his tenderest point. But I have opened it, and, struggle as he may, it shall not be closed again."

She spoke bitterly, and Maude knew that Dr. Kennedy had more than met his equal in that woman of iron will.

"I should have made a splendid carpenter," the lady continued, "for nothing pleases me more than the sound of the hammer and saw, and when you are gone, I shall solace myself with fixing the entire house. I must have excitement, or die as the others did."

"Maude—Mrs. Kennedy, do you know what time it is?" came from the foot of the stairs, and Mrs. Kennedy answered, "It is one o'clock, I believe."

"Then why are you sitting up so late, and why is that *lamp* left burning in the parlor, with *four* tubes going off at once? It's a maxim of mine"—

"Spare your maxims, do. I'm coming directly," and kissing the blind girl affectionately, Mrs. Kennedy went down to her liege lord, whom she found extinguishing the light, and gently shaking the lamp to see how much fluid had been uselessly wasted.

He might have made some conjugal remark, but the expression of her face forbade anything like reproof, and he soon found use for his powers of speech in the invectives he heaped upon the long rocker of the chair over which he stumbled as he groped his way back to the bed-

room, where his wife rather enjoyed, than otherwise, the lamentations which he made over his "bruised shin." The story she had been telling, had awaked many bitter memories in Maude Glendower's bosom, and for hours she turned uneasily from side to side, trying in vain to sleep. Maude Remington, too, was wakeful, thinking over the strange tale she had heard, and marveling that her life should be so closely interwoven with that of the woman whom she called her mother.

"I love her all the more," she said, "I shall pity her so, staying here alone, when I am gone."

Then her thoughts turned upon the future, when she would be the wife of James De Vere, and while wondering if she should really ever see again, she fell asleep just as the morning was dimly breaking in the east.

CHAPTER XIX.

A SECOND BRIDAL.

AFTER the night of which we have written, the tie of affection between Mrs. Kennedy and the blind girl was stronger than before, and when the former said to her husband, "Maude must have an outfit worthy of a rich man's step-daughter," he knew by the tone of her voice that remonstrance was useless, and answered meekly, "I will do what is right, but don't be too extravagant, for Nellie's clothes almost ruined me, and I had to pay for that piano yesterday. Will fifty dollars do?"

"Fifty dollars!" repeated the lady. "Are you crazy?" Then, touched perhaps by the submissive expression of his face, she added, "As Maude is blind, she will not need as much as if she were going at once into society. I'll try and make two hundred dollars answer, though that will purchase but a meagre *trousseau*."

Mrs. Kennedy's pronunciation of French was not always correct, and John, who chanced to be within hearing, caught eagerly at the last word, exclaiming, "Ki! dem *trouses* must cost a heap sight mor'n mine! What dis nigger spec' 'em can be?" and he glanced ruefully at his own glazed pants of corduroy, which had done him service for two or three years.

Maude was a great favorite with John, and when he heard that she was going away forever, he went up to

the woodshed chamber where no one could see him, and seating himself upon a pile of old shingles, which had been put there for kindling, he cried like a child.

"It'll be mighty lonesome, knowin' she's gone for good," he said, "for, though she'll come back agin, she'll be married, and when a gal is married, that's the last on 'em. I wish I could give her somethin', to show her my feelin's."

He examined his hands, they were hard, rough, and black. He drew from his pocket a bit of looking-glass, and examined his face—that was blacker yet; and shaking his head, he whispered: "It might do for a mulatto gal, but not for her." Then, as a new idea crossed his mind, he brightened up, exclaiming, "My *heart* is white, and if I have a tip-top case, mebbby she won't 'spise a poor old nigger's picter!"

In short, John contemplated having his daguerreotype taken as a bridal present for Maude. Accordingly, that very afternoon, he arrayed himself in his best, and, entering the yellow car of a traveling artist, who had recently come to the village, he was soon in possession of a splendid case, and a picture which he pronounced "on-common good lookin' for him."

This he laid carefully away, untill the wedding-day, which was fixed for the 15th of April. When Mr. De Vere heard of John's generosity to Maude in giving her the golden eagles, he promptly paid them back, adding five more as interest, and at the same time asking him if he would not like to accompany them to Europe.

"You can be of great assistance to us," he said, "and I will gladly take you."

This was a strong temptation, and for a moment the

negro hesitated, but when his eye fell upon his master, who was just then entering the gate, his decision was taken, and he answered, "No, I'm 'bleeged to you. I'd rather stay and see the fun."

"What fun?" asked Mr. De Vere; and John replied, "The fun of seein' him cotch it;" and he pointed to the doctor coming slowly up the walk, his hands behind him and his head bent forward in a musing attitude.

Dr. Kennedy was at that moment, in an unenviable frame of mind, for he was trying to decide whether he could part for a year or more with his crippled boy, who grew each day more dear to him.

"It will do him good, I know," he said, "and I might, perhaps, consent, if I could spare the money, but I can't, for I haven't got it. That woman keeps me penniless, and will wheedle me out of two hundred dollars more. Oh, Mat"—

He did not finish the sentence, for by this time he had reached the hall, where he met Mr. De Vere, who asked if Louis was to go.

"He can't," answered the doctor. "I have not the means. Mrs. Kennedy says Maude's wardrobe will cost two hundred dollars."

"Excuse me, sir," interrupted Mr. De Vere. "I shall attend to Maude's wants myself, and if you are not able to bear Louis's expenses, I will willingly do it for the sake of having him with his sister. They ought not to be separated, and who knows but Louis's deformity may be in a measure relieved?"

This last decided the matter. Louis should go, even though his father mortgaged his farm to pay the bill, and during the few weeks which elapsed before the 15th,

the house presented an air of bustle and confusion, equal to that which preceded Nellie's bridal. Mr. De Vere remained firm in his intention to defray all Maude's expenses, and he delegated to Mrs. Kennedy the privilege of purchasing whatever she thought was needful. Her selections were usually in good taste, and in listening to her enthusiastic praises, Maude enjoyed her new dresses almost as much as if she had really seen them. A handsome plain silk of blue and brown was decided upon for a traveling dress, and very sweetly the blind girl looked when, arrayed in her simple attire, she stood before the man of God, whose words were to make her a happy bride. She could not see the sunlight of Spring streaming into the room, neither could she see the sunlight of love shining over the face of James De Vere, nor yet the earnest gaze of those who thought her so beautiful in her helplessness, but she could feel it all, and the long eyelashes resting on her cheek were wet with tears, when a warm kiss was pressed upon her lips, and a voice murmured in her ear, "My wife—my darling Maude."

There were bitter tears shed at that parting; Maude Glendower weeping passionately over the child of Harry Remington, and Doctor Kennedy hugging to his bosom the little hunchback boy, Matty's boy and his. They might never meet again, and the father's heart clung fondly to his only son. He could not even summon to his aid a maxim with which to season his farewell, and bidding a kind good-by to Maude, he sought the privacy of his chamber, where he could weep alone in his desolation.

Hannah and John grieved to part with the travelers, but the latter was somewhat consoled by the gracious manner with which Maude had accepted his gift.

"I cannot see it," she said, "but when I open the casing, I shall know your kind, honest face is there, and it will bring me many pleasant memories of you."

"Heaven bless you, Miss Maude," answered John, struggling hard to keep back the tears he deemed it unmanly to shed. "Heaven bless you, but if you keep talking so book-like and good, I'll bust out a cryin', I know, for I'm nothin' but an old fool anyhow," and wringing her hand, he hurried off into the woodshed chamber, where he could give free vent to his grief.

* * * * *

Through the harbor, down the bay, and out upon the sea, a noble vessel rides; and as the evening wind comes dancing o'er the wave, it sweeps across the deck, kissing the cheek of a brown-eyed boy, and lifting the curls from the brow of one, whose face, upturned to the tall man at her side, seems almost angelic, so calm, so peaceful is its expression of perfect bliss. Many have gazed curiously upon that group, and the voices were very low which said, "The little boy is deformed," while there was a world of sadness in the whisper, which told to the wondering passengers that "the beautiful bride was blind."

They knew it by the constant drooping of her eyelids, by the graceful motion of her hand as it groped in the air, and more than all, by the untiring watchfulness of the husband and brother who constantly hovered near. It seemed terrible that so fair a creature should be blind; and like the throb of one great heart did the sympathy of that vessel's crew go out toward the gentle Maude, who, in her new-born happiness, forgot almost the darkness of the world without, or if she thought of it, looked forward to a time when hope said that she should see

again. So, leaving her upon the sea, speeding away to sunny France, we glance backward for a moment to the lonely house where Maude Glendower mourns for Harry's child, and where the father thinks often of his boy, listening in vain for the sound which once was hateful to his ear, the sound of Louis's crutches.

Neither does John forget the absent ones, but in the garden, in the barn, in the fields, and the wood-shed chamber, he prays in his mongrel dialect, that He who holds the wind in the hollow of His hand, will give to the treacherous deep charge concerning the precious freight it bears. He does not say it in those words, but his untutored language, coming from a pure heart, is heard by the Most High. And so the breeze blows gently o'er the bark thus followed by black John's prayers—the skies look brightly down upon it—the blue waves ripple at its side, until at last it sails into its destined port; and when the apple-blossoms are dropping from the trees, and old Hannah lays upon the grass to bleach the fanciful white-spread which her own hands have knit for Maude, there comes a letter to the lonely household, telling them that the feet of those they love, have reached the shores of the old world.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SEXTON.

THE Methodist Society of Laurel Hill had built them a new church upon the corner of the common, and as a mark of respect, had made black John their sexton. Perfectly delighted with the office, he discharged his duties faithfully, particularly the ringing of the bell, in which accomplishment he greatly excelled his Episcopal rival, who tried to imitate his peculiar style in vain. No one could make such music as the negro, or ring so many changes. In short, it was conceded that on great occasions, he actually made the old bell *talk*; and one day, toward the last of September, and five months after the events of the preceding chapter, an opportunity was presented for a display of his skill.

The afternoon was warm and sultry, and, overcome by the heat, the village loungers had disposed of themselves, some on the long piazza of the hotel, and others in front of the principal store, where, with elevated heels and busy jackknives, they whittled out shapeless things, or made remarks concerning any luckless female who chanced to pass. While thus engaged, they were startled by a loud, sharp ring from the belfry of the Methodist church, succeeded by a merry peal, which seemed to proclaim some joyful event. It was a musical, rollicking ring, consisting of three rapid strokes, the last prolonged a little, as if to give it emphasis.

THE SEXTON.

"What's up now?" the loungers said to each other, as the three strokes were repeated in rapid succession. "What's got into John?" and those who were fortunate enough to own houses in the village, went into the street to assure themselves there was no fire.

"It can't be a toll," they said. "It's too much like a dancing tune for that," and as the sound continued, they walked rapidly to the church, where they found the African bending himself with might and main to his task, the perspiration dripping from his sable face, which was all aglow with happiness.

It was no common occasion which had thus affected John, and to the eager questioning of his audience, he replied, "Can't you hear the ding—dong—de-el. Don't you know what it says? Listen now," and the bell again rang forth the three short sounds. But the crowd still professed their ignorance, and, pausing a moment, John said, with a deprecating manner: "I'll tell you the first word, and you'll surely guess the rest: it's 'MAUDE.' Now try 'em," and wiping the sweat from his brow, he turned again to his labor of love, nodding his head with every stroke.

"No ear at all for music," he muttered, as he saw they were as mystified as ever, and in a loud, clear voice, he sang, "MAUDE CAN-SEE-E! MAUDE CAN-SEE-E!"

It was enough. Most of that group had known and respected the blind girl, and joining at once in the negro's enthusiasm, they sent up a deafening shout for "*Maude De Vere*, restored to sight."

John's face at that moment was a curiosity, so divided was it between smiles and tears, the latter of which won the mastery, as with the last hurrah the bell gave one

tremendous crash, and he sank exhausted upon the floor, saying to those who gathered round, "Will 'em hear that, think, in France?"

"How do you know it is true?" asked one, and John replied, "she *writ* her own self to tell it, and sent her love to *me*; think of dat—sent her love to an old nigger!" and John glanced at the bell, as if he intended a repetition of the rejoicings.

Surely Maude De Vere, across the sea, never received a greater tribute of respect than was paid to her that day by the warm-hearted John, who, the moment he heard the glad news, sped away to proclaim it from the church-tower. The letter had come that afternoon, and, as John said, was written by Maude herself. The experiment had been performed weeks before, but she would wait until assurance was doubly sure, ere she sent home the joyful tidings. It was a wonderful cure, for the chance of success was small, but the efforts used in her behalf had succeeded, and she could see again.

"But what of Louis?" asked Dr. Kennedy, who was listening while his wife read to him the letter. "What of Louis? Have they done any thing for him?"

"They had tried, but his deformity could not be helped," and with a pang of disappointment the father was turning away, when something caught his ear, which caused him to listen again.

"You don't know," Maude wrote, "how great a lion Louis is getting to be. He painted a picture of me just as I looked that dreadful morning when I stood in the sunshine and *felt* that I was blind. It is a strange, wild thing, but its wildness is relieved by the angel-faced boy who looks up at me so pitiingly. Louis is perfect, but

Maude—oh! I can scarce believe that she ever wore that expression of fierce despair. Strange as it may seem, this picture took the fancy of the excitable French, and ere Louis was aware of it, he found himself famous. They come to our rooms daily to see *le petit artist*, and many ask for pictures or sketches, for which they pay an exorbitant price. One wealthy American gentleman brought him a daguerreotype of his dead child, with the request that he would paint from it a life-sized portrait, and if he succeed in getting a natural face, he is to receive five hundred dollars. Think of little Louis Kennedy earning five hundred dollars, for he *will* succeed. The daguerreotype is much like Nellie, which will make it easier for Louis."

This was very gratifying to Dr. Kennedy, who that day more than once repeated to himself, "Five hundred dollars: it's a great deal of money for him to earn; maybe he'll soon be able to help me, and mercy knows I shall soon need it if that woman continues her unheard-of extravagances. More city company to-morrow, and I heard her this morning tell that Jezebel in the kitchen to put the whites of *sixteen* eggs into one loaf of cake. What am I coming to?" and Dr. Kennedy groaned in spirit as he walked through the handsome apartments, seeking in vain for a place where he could sit and have it seem as it used to do, when the rocking-chair which Matty had brought stood invitingly in the middle of the room, where now a centre-table was standing, covered with books and ornaments of the most expensive kind.

Since last we looked in upon her Maude Glendower had ruled with a high hand. She could not live without excitement, and rallying from her grief at parting with her child, she plunged at once into repairs, tearing down and

building up, while her husband looked on in dismay. When they were about it, she said, they might as well have all the modern improvements, and water, both hot and cold, was accordingly carried to all the sleeping apartments, the fountain-head being a large spring, distant from the house nearly half a mile. Gas she could not have, though the doctor would hardly have been surprised had she ordered the laying of pipes from Rochester to *Laurel Hill*, so utterly reckless did she seem. She was fond of company, and as she had visited every body, so every body in return must visit her, she said, and toward the last of summer she filled the house with city people, who vastly enjoyed the good cheer with which her table was always spread.

John's desire to see the fun was more than satisfied, as was also Hannah's, and after the receipt of Maude's letter, the latter determined to write herself, "and let Miss De Vere know just how things was managed." In order to do this, it was necessary to employ an amanuensis, and she enlisted the services of the gardener, who wrote her exact language, a mixture of negro, Southern, and Yankee. A portion of this letter we give to the reader.

After expressing her pleasure that Maude could see, and saying that she believed the *new Miss* to be a good woman, but a mighty queer one, she continued:—

"The doin's here is wonderful, and you'd hardly know the old place. Thar's a big dining-room run out to the South, with an expansion-table mighty nigh a rod long, and what's more, it's allus full, too, of city stuck-ups—and the way they do eat! I haint churned nary pound of butter since you went away. Why, bless yer soul, we has to *buy*. Do you mind that patch of land what the

Doctor used to plant with corn? Well, the garden sass grows there now, and t'other garden raises nothin' but flowers and strabries, and thar's a man hired on purpose to tend 'em. He's writin' this for me. Thar's a tower run up in the North-east eend, and when it's complete, she's goin' to have a what you call 'em—somethin' that blows up the water—oh, a fountain. Thar's one in the yard, and, if you'll believe it, she's got one of Cary's rotary pumpin' things, that folks are runnin' crazy about, and every hot day she keeps John a turnin' the injin' to squirt the water all over the yard, and make it seem like a thunder-shower! Thar's a bath-room, and when them city folks is here some on 'em is a washin' in thar all the time. I don't do nothin' now but wash and iron, and if I have *fifty* towels I have *one*! But what pesters me most is the wide skirts I has to do up; Miss *Canady* wears a *hoop* bigger than an *amberell*. They say Miss Empress, who makes these things, lives in Paris, and I wish you'd put yourself out a little to see her, and ask her, for me, to quit sendin' over them fetched hoops. Thar aint no sense in it! We've got jiggers in every chamber where the water spirts out. Besides turnin' the injin, John drives the horses in the new carriage. Dr. Canady looks poorly, and yet madam purrs round him like a kitten, but I knows the claws is thar. She's about broke him of usin' them *maxims* of his, and your poor marm would enjoy it a spell secin' him paid off, but she'd pity him after a while. I do, and if things continners to grow wus, I shall just ask pra'rs for him in my meetin'. Elder Blossom is powerful at that. My health is considerable good, but I find I grow old.

"Yours, with respect and regrets,

"HANNAH."

"P. S.—I don't believe that t'other beau of yourn is none the happiest. They live with Miss Kelsey yet, but thar's a story round that she's a gwine to marry again, and the man don't like De Vere, and won't have him thar, so if the doctor should run out, as I'm afraid he will, what'll them lazy critters do? Nellie's got to be kinder sozzlin' in her dress, and he has took to chawin' tobacker by the pound. They was here a spell ago, and deaf as I be, I hearn 'em have one right smart quarrel. He said she was slatterly, or somethin' like that, and she called him a *fool*, and said she 'most knew he wished he'd took you, blind as you was, and he said, kinder sorry-like, "Maude would never of called me a fool, nor wore such holes in the heels of her stockin's." I couldn't hear no more, but I knew by her voice that she was cryin', and when I went below and seen the doctor out behind the wood-shed a figgerin' up, says I to myself, "ef I was a Univarselar, I should b'lieve they was all on 'em a gittin thar pay," but bein' I'm a Methodis', I don't believe nothin'."

This letter, which conveyed to Maude a tolerably correct idea of matters at home, will also show to the reader the state of feeling existing between J. C. and Nellie. They were not suited to each other, and though married but seven months, there had been many a quarrel besides the one which Hannah overheard. Nellie demanded of her husband more love than he had to bestow, and the consequence was, a feeling of bitter jealousy on her part and an increasing coldness on his. They were an ill-assorted couple, utterly incapable of taking care of themselves, and when they heard from Mrs. Kelsey that she really contemplated a second marriage, they looked forward to the future with a kind of hopeless apathy, wholly

at variance with the feelings of the beautiful, dark-eyed Maude, and the noble James De Vere.

Their love for each other had increased each day, and their happiness seemed almost greater than they could bear on that memorable morn when the husband bent fondly over his young girl-wife, who laid a hand on each side of his face, and while the great tears rolled down her cheeks, whispered joyfully, "I can see you, darling; I can see!"

CHAPTER XXI.

HOME AGAIN.

LITTLE more than two years have passed away since the September afternoon when the deep-toned bell rang out the merry tidings, "Maude can see—Maude can see," and again upon the billow another vessel rides. But this time to the westward; and the beautiful lady, whose soft, dark eyes look eagerly over the wave, says to her companion, "It is very pleasant going home."

They had tarried for a long time in Italy, both for Louis's sake, and because, after the recovery of her sight, Maude's health had been delicate, and her husband would stay until it was fully re-established. She was better now;—roses were blooming on her cheek—joy was sparkling in her eye—while her bounding step, her ringing laugh, and finely rounded form, told of youthful vigor and perfect health. And they were going home at last—James, Louis, and Maude—going to Hampton, where Mrs. De Vere waited so anxiously their coming. She did not, however, expect them so soon, for they had left England earlier than they anticipated, and they surprised her one day, as she sat by her pleasant window, gazing out upon the western sky, and wondering how many more suns would set ere her children would be with her. It was a happy meeting: and after the first joy of it was over, Maude inquired after the people at Laurel Hill.

"It is more than four months since we heard from them," she said, "and then Mrs. Kennedy's letter was very unsatisfactory. The doctor, she hinted, had lost his senses, but she made no explanation. What did she mean?"

"Why," returned Mrs. De Vere, "he had a paralytic shock more than six months ago."

"Oh, poor father," cried Louis, while Mrs. De Vere continued, "It was not a severe attack, but it has impaired his health somewhat. You knew, of course, that his house and farm were to be sold in a few days."

"Our house—our old home—it shall not be;" and the tears glittered in Louis's eyes, while, turning to Mrs. De Vere, Maude whispered softly, "His wife has ruined him, but don't let us talk of it before Louis."

The lady nodded, and when at last they were alone, told all she knew of the affair. Maude Glendower had persisted in her folly, until her husband's property was reduced to a mere pittance. There was a heavy mortgage upon the farm, and even a chattel-mortgage upon the furniture, and as the man who held them was stern and unrelenting, he had foreclosed, and the house was to be sold at auction.

"Why has mother kept it from us?" said Maude, and Mrs. De Vere replied, "Pride and a dread of what you might say, prevented her writing it, I think. I was there myself a few weeks since, and she said it could do no good to trouble you. The doctor is completely broken down, and seems like an old man. He cannot endure the handsome rooms below, but stays all day in that small garret chamber, which is furnished with your carpet, your mother's chair, and the high-post bedstead which his first

wife owned. It made me cry when he pointed them out to me, saying so mournfully, 'This is Maude's, this was Matty's, and that was Katy's once.'"

Maude's sympathies were roused, and, fatigued as she was, she started the next morning with her husband and brother for Laurel Hill. Louis seemed very sad, and not even the familiar waymarks, as he drew near his home, had power to dissipate that sadness. He could not endure the thought that the house where he was born and where his mother had died, should pass into the hands of strangers. He had been fortunate with his paintings, and of his own money had nearly two thousand dollars; but this could do but little toward canceling the mortgage, and he continued in the same dejected mood until the tall poplars of Laurel Hill appeared in view. Then, indeed, he brightened up, for there is something in the sight of home which brings joy to every human heart.

It was a hazy October day. The leaves were dropping one by one, and lay in little hillocks upon the faded grass. The blue hills which embosomed the lake were encircled with a misty veil, while the sunshine seemed to fall with a sombre light upon the fields of yellow corn. Every thing, even the gossamer thistle-top which floated upon the autumnal air, conspired to make the day one of those indescribable days, when all hearts are pervaded with a feeling of pleasurable sadness—a sense of beauty mingled with decay.

"Is *this* home?" cried Maude, as they stopped before the gate. "I should hardly have recognized it."

It was indeed greatly changed, for Maude Glendower had perfect taste, and if she had expended thousands upon the place, she had greatly increased its value.

"Beautiful home, beautiful home—it must not be sold," was Louis's exclamation as he gazed upon it.

"No, it must not be sold," returned Maude, while her husband smiled quietly upon them both, and said nothing.

Maude Glendower had gone to an adjoining town, but Hannah and John greeted the strangers with noisy demonstrations, the latter making frequent use of his coat skirts to wipe away his tears.

"Can you see, marm—see me as true as you live?" he said, bowing with great humility to Maude, of whom he stood a little in awe, so polished were her manners, and so elegant her appearance.

Maude assured him that she could, and then observing how impatient Louis appeared, she asked for Dr. Kennedy. Assuming a mysterious air, old Hannah whispered, "He's up in de ruff, at de top of de house, in dat little charmbur, where he stays mostly, to get shet of de music and dancin' and raisin' ob cain generally. He's mighty broke down, but the sight of you will peart him up right smart. You'd better go up alone—he'll bar it better one at a time."

"Yes, go, sister," said Louis, who heard the last part of Hannah's remarks, and felt that he could not take his father by surprise.

So, leaving her husband and brother below, Maude glided noiselessly up stairs to the low attic room, where, by an open window, gazing sorrowfully out upon the broad harvest-fields, soon to be no longer his, a seemingly old man sat. And Dr. Kennedy was old, not in years, perhaps, but in appearance. His hair had bleached as white as snow, his form was bent, his face was furrowed with many a line of care, while the tremulous motion of

his head told of the palsy's blighting power. And he sat there alone, that hazy autumnal day, shrinking from the future, and musing sadly of the past. From his arm-chair the top of a willow-tree was just discernable, and as he thought of the two graves beneath that tree, he moaned, "Oh, Katy, Matty, darlings. You would pity me, I know, could you see me now so lonesome. My only boy is over the sea—my only daughter is selfish and cold, and all the day I'm listening in vain for some one to call me father."

"*Father!*" The name dropped involuntarily from the lips of Maude De Vere, standing without the door.

But he did not hear it, and she could not say it again, for he was not her father; but her heart was moved with sympathy, and going to his side, she laid her hands upon his snowy hair, and looked into his face.

"Maude—Matty's Maude—my Maude!" And the poor head shook with a palsied tremor, as he wound his arms around her, and asked her when she came.

Her sudden coming unmanned him wholly, and bending over her he wept like a little child. It would seem that her presence inspired in him a sense of protection, a longing to detail his grievances, and with quivering lips he said, "I am broken in body and mind. I've nothing to call my own, nothing but a lock of Matty's hair and Louis's little crutches—the crutches that you cushioned so that I should not hear their sound. I was a hard-hearted monster then. I ain't much better now, but I love my child. What of Louis, Maude? Tell me of my boy," and over the wrinkled face of the old man broke beautifully the father-love, giving place to the father-pride, as Maude told of Louis's success, of the fame he won, and the money he had earned.

"Money!" Dr. Kennedy started quickly at that word, but ere he could repeat it, his ear caught a coming sound, and his eyes flashed eagerly as, grasping the arm of Maude, he whispered, "It's music, Maude—it's music—don't you hear it? Louis's crutches on the stairs. He comes; he comes! Matty's boy and mine! Thank heaven, I have something left in which *that woman* has no part."

In his excitement he had risen, and, with lips apart, and eyes bent on the open door, he waited for his crippled boy, nor waited long ere Louis came in sight, when, with a wild, glad cry, which made the very rafters ring, he caught him to his bosom. Silently Maude stole from the room, leaving them thus together, the father and his son. Nor is it for us to intrude upon the sanctity of that interview, which lasted more than an hour, and was finally terminated by the arrival of Maude Glendower. She had returned sooner than was anticipated, and, after joyfully greeting Maude, started in quest of Louis.

"Don't let her in here," whispered the doctor, as he heard her on the stairs. Don't let her in here; she'd be seized with a fit of repairs. Go to her; she loves you, at least."

Louis obeyed, and in a moment was in the arms of his stepmother. She had changed since last they met. Much of her soft, voluptuous beauty was gone, and in its place was a look of desperation, as if she did not care for what she had done, and meant to brave it through. Still, when alone with Mr. De Vere and Maude, she conversed freely of their misfortunes, and ere the day was over, they thoroughly understood the matter. The doctor was ruined; and when his wife was questioned of the future, she professed to have formed no plan, unless, indeed, her husband

lived with Nellie, who was now house-keeping, while she went whither she could find a place. To this arrangement Mr. De Vere made no comment. He did not seem disposed to *talk*, but when the day of sale came, he *acted*; and it was soon understood that the house together with fifty acres of land would pass into his hands. Louis, too, was busy. Singling out every article of furniture which had been his mother's, he bought it with his own money, while John, determining that "t'other one," as he called Katy, should not be entirely overlooked, bid off the high-post bedstead and chest of drawers, which once were hers. Many of the more elegant pieces of furniture were sold, but Mr. De Vere kept enough to furnish the house handsomely; and when the sale was over and the family once more reassembled in the pleasant parlor, Dr. Kennedy wept like a child as he blessed the noble young man who had kept for him his home. Maude Glendower, too, was softened; and going up to Mr. De Vere, she said, "If I know how to spend lavishly, I know also how to economize, and henceforth none shall accuse me of extravagance."

These were no idle words, for, as well as she could, she kept her promise; and though she often committed errors, she usually tried to do the thing which her children would approve. After a day or two, Mr. De Vere and Maude returned to Hampton, leaving Louis with his father, who, in his society, grew better and happier each day. Hannah, who was growing old, went, from choice, to live with Maude, but John would not forsake his master. Nobody knew the *kinks* of the old place like himself, he said, and he accordingly staid, superintending the whole, and coming ere long to speak of it all as *his*. It was *his* farm,

his oxen, his horses, his every thing, except the *pump*, which Hannah, in her letter to Maude, had designated as an *injin*. Upon this he looked a little askance.

"'Twas a mighty good thing in its place," he said, "and at a fire it couldn't be beat, but he'd be hanged if he didn't b'lieve a nigger was made for somethin' harder and more sweaty-like than turnin' that crank to make b'lieve *rain* when it didn't. He reckoned the Lord knew what he was about, and if He was a mind to dry up the grass and the arbs, it wasn't for *Cary* nor nary other chap to take the matter into their own hands, and invent a *patent thunder-shower*."

John reasoned clearly upon some subjects, and though his reasoning was not always correct, he proved a most invaluable servant. Old Hannah's place was filled by another colored woman, Sylvia, and though John greatly admired her complexion, as being one which would not fade, he lamented her inefficiency, and often expressed a wish that the services of Janet Hopkins could be again secured.

But Janet was otherwise engaged; and here, near the close of our story, it may not be amiss to glance for a moment at one who in the commencement of the narrative occupied a conspicuous place. About the time of Maude's blindness, she had removed to a town in the southern part of New York, and though she wrote ap-
prising her young mistress of the change, she forgot entirely to say *where* she was going, consequently the family were ignorant of her place of residence, until accident revealed it to J. C. De Vere. It was but a few weeks preceding Maude's return from Europe that he found himself compelled to spend a Sabbath in the quiet town of

Fayette. Not far from his hotel, an Episcopal church reared its slender tower, and thither, at the usual hour for service, he wended his way. There was to be a baptism that morning, and many a smile flitted over the face of matron and maid, as a meek-looking man came slowly up the aisle, followed by a short, thick, resolute Scotch-woman, in whom we recognize our old friend Janet Hopkins. Notwithstanding her firm conviction that MAUDE MATILDA REMINGTON BLODGETT was her last and only one, she was now the mother of a sturdy boy, which the meek man carried in his arms. Hot disputes there had been between the twain concerning a *name*, Mr. Hopkins advocating simply *John*, as having been borne by his sire, while Janet, a little proud of the notoriety which her daughter's cognomen had brought to her, determined to honor her boy with a name which should astonish every one.

At the time of Maude's engagement with J. C. De Vere, she had written to know what *J. C.* was for, and *Jedediah Cleishbotham* pleased her fancy as being unusual and odd. Indirectly she had heard that Maude was married to *Mr. De Vere*, and gone to Europe, and supposing it was of course J. C. she, on this occasion, startled her better half by declaring that her son should be baptized "*John Joel Jedediah Cleishbotham*" or nothing! It was in vain that he remonstrated. Janet was firm, and hunting up Maude's letter, written more than three years before, she bade him write down the name, so as not to make a blunder. But this he refused to do, "He guessed he could remember that horrid name; there was not another like it in Christendom," he said, and on the Sunday morning of which we write, he took his baby in his

arms, and in a state of great nervous irritability, started for church, repeating to himself the names, particularly the last, which troubled him the most. Many a change he rang upon it, and by the time he stood before the altar, the perspiration was starting from every pore, so anxious was he to acquit himself creditably, and thus avoid the Caudle lecture which was sure to follow a mistake, "But he should *not* make a mistake, he knew exactly what the name was, he'd said it over a hundred times," and when the minister, taking the baby in his arms, said, "Name this child," he spoke up loud and promptly, jerking out the last word with a vengeance, as if relieved to have it off his mind, "JOHN JOEL JEDEDIAH LEUSEBOTTOM."

"That's for me," was J. C.'s involuntary exclamation, which however, was lost amid the general titter and half suppressed laugh which ran through the house.

In an agony of anxiety Janet strove to rectify the mistake, while her elbow sought the ribs of her conjugal lord; but the minister paid no heed; and when the screaming infant was given back to its frightened father's arms, it bore the name of "*John Joel*," and nothing more.

To this catastrophe, Janet was in a measure reconciled, when after church J. C. sought her out, and introducing himself, informed her of the true state of affairs.

"Then you *ain't* married to Maude after all," said the astonished Janet, as she proceeded to question him of the doctor's family. "It beats all, I never heard on't, but no wonder, livin' as we do in this out o' the way place,—no cars,—no stage,—no post office but twice a week—no nothin'."

This was indeed the reason why Janet had remained so

long in ignorance of the people with whom she formerly lived. Fayette, as she said, was an out of the way place, and after hearing from a man who met them in New York, that Maude and Louis were both gone to Europe, she gave Laurel Hill no further thought, and settled quietly down among the hills until her monotonous life was broken by the birth of a son, the John Joel, who, as she talked with J. C., slept calmly in his crib.

"So you aint merried to her," she kept repeating, her anger at her husband's treacherous memory fast decreasing. "I kinder thought her losin' my money might make a difference, but you're jest as happy with Nellie, aint you?"

The question was abrupt, and J. C. colored crimson, as he tried to stammer out an answer.

"Never you mind," returned Janet, noticing his embarrassment. "Married life is just like a checker-board, and all on us has as much as we can do to swaller it at times, but you would of been happy with Maude, I know."

J. C. knew so, too, and long after he parted with Janet her last words were ringing in his ears, while mingled with them was the bitter memory, "It might perhaps have been."

But there was no hope now, and with an increased air of dejection, he went back to his cheerless home. They were housekeeping, Nellie and himself, for Mrs. Kelsey had married again, and as the new husband did not fancy the young people, they had set up an establishment of their own, and J. C. was fast learning how utterly valueless are soft, white hands, when their owner knows not how to use them. Though keeping up an outside show, he was really very poor, and when he heard of the doc-

tor's misfortune, he went to his chamber and wept as few men ever weep. As Hannah well expressed it, "he was shiftless," and did not know how to take care of himself. This James De Vere understood, and after the sale at Laurel Hill, he turned his attention to his unfortunate cousin, and succeeded at last in securing for him the situation of book-keeper in a large establishment in New York, with which he was himself remotely connected. Thither, about Christmas, J. C. and Nellie went, and from her small back-room in the fifth story of a New York boarding-house, Nellie writes to Louis glowing descriptions of *high life* in the city, and Louis, glancing at his crutches and withered feet, smiles as he thinks how weary he should be climbing the four flights of stairs which lead to that *high life*.

And now, with one more glance at Maude, we bring our story to a close. It is Easter, and over the earth the April sun shines brightly, just as it shone on the Judean hills eighteen hundred years ago. The Sabbath bells are ringing, and the merry peal which comes from the Methodist tower bespeaks in John a frame of mind unsuited to the occasion. Since forsaking the Episcopalians, he had seldom attended their service, but this morning, after his task is done, he will steal quietly across the common to the old stone church, where James De Vere and Maude sing together the glorious Easter Anthem. Maude formerly sang the alto, but in the old world her voice was trained to the higher notes, and to-day it will be heard in the choir where it has so long been missed.

The bells have ceased to toll, and a family group come slowly up the aisle. Dr. Kennedy slightly bent, his white hair shading a brow from which much of his former ster-

ness has gone, and his hand shaking but slightly as he opens the pew door and then steps back for the lady to enter, the lady Maude Glendower, who walks not as proudly as of old. She, too, has been made better by adversity, and though she will never love the palsied man, her husband, she will be to him a faithful wife, and a devoted mother to his boy, who in the square, old fashioned pew, sits where his eye can rest upon his beautiful sister, as her snowy fingers sweep once more the organ keys, which tremble joyfully as it were to the familiar touch. Low, deep-toned and heavy is the prelude to the song, and they who listen feel the floor tremble beneath their feet. Then a strain of richest melody echoes through the house, and the congregation held their breath, as Maude De Vere sings to them of the Passover once sacrificed for us.

The Anthem is finished. There is a heightened bloom upon Maude's cheek, a softer lustre in her eye, while throughout the church there is a solemn hush, which the man of God seems loth to break. And now, shall we not leave them thus with the holy Easter light streaming up the narrow aisles, and the sweet music of the Easter song dying on the air.

THE END.

ROSAMOND;

OR,

THE YOUTHFUL ERROR.

ROSAMOND;
OR,
THE YOUTHFUL ERROR.

A TALE OF RIVERSIDE.

CHAPTER I.

THE OWNER OF RIVERSIDE.

ALL the day long the September rain had fallen, and when the night closed in it showed no sign of weariness, but with the same monotonous patter dropped upon the roof, or beat against the windows of the pleasantly lighted room where a young man sat gazing at the glowing grate, and listening apparently to the noise of the storm without. But neither the winds, nor yet the rain, had a part of that young man's thoughts, for they were with the past, and the chain which linked them to that past was the open letter which lay on the table beside him. For that letter he had waited long and anxiously, wondering what it would contain, and if his overtures for reconciliation with one who had erred far more than himself, would be accepted. It had come at last, and with a gathering coldness at his heart he had read the decision,—“she would not be reconciled,” and she bade him “go his way alone and leave her to herself.”

"It is well," he said; "I shall never trouble her again,"—and with a feeling of relief, as if a heavy load, a dread of coming evil, had been taken from his mind, he threw the letter upon the table, and leaning back in his cushioned chair, tried to fancy that the last few years of his life were blotted out.

"Could it be so, Ralph Browning would be a different man," he said aloud; then, as he glanced round the richly furnished room, he continued—"People call me happy, and so perhaps I might be, but for this haunting memory. Why was it suffered to be, and must I make a life-long atonement for that early sin?"

In his excitement he arose, and crushing the letter for a moment in his hand, hurled it into the fire; then, going to his private drawer, he took out and opened a neatly folded package, containing a long tress of jet black hair. Shudderingly he wound it around his fingers, laid it over the back of his hand, held it up to the light, and then with a hard, dark look upon his face, threw it, too, upon the grate, saying aloud, "Thus perisheth every memento of the past, and I am free again—free as air!"

He walked to the window, and pressing his burning forehead against the cool, damp pane, looked out upon the night. He could not see through the darkness, but had it been day, his eye would have rested on broad acres all his own; for Ralph Browning was a wealthy man, and the house in which he lived was his by right of inheritance from a bachelor uncle for whom he had been named, and who, two years before our story opens, had died, leaving to his nephew the grand old place, called *Riverside*, from its nearness to the river. It was a most beautiful spot; and when its new master first took possession

of it, the maids and matrons of Granby, who had mourned for the elder Browning as people mourn for a good man, felt themselves somewhat consoled from the fact that his successor was young and handsome, and would doubtless prove an invaluable acquisition to their fireside circles, and furnish a theme for gossip, without which no village can well exist. But in the first of their expectations they were mistaken, for Mr. Browning shunned rather than sought society, and spent the most of his leisure hours in the seclusion of his library, where, as Mrs. Peters, his housekeeper, said, he did nothing but mope over books and walk the floor. "He was melancholy," she said; "there was something workin' on his mind, and what it was she didn't know more'n the dead—though she knew as well as she wanted to, that he had been crossed in love, for what else would make so many of his hairs gray, and he not yet twenty-five!"

That there was a mystery connected with him, was conceded by most of the villagers, and many a curious gaze they bent upon the grave, dignified young man, who seldom joined in their pastime or intruded himself upon their company. Much sympathy was expressed for him in his loneliness, by the people of Granby, and more than one young girl would gladly have imposed upon herself the task of cheering that loneliness; but he seemed perfectly invulnerable to maiden charms; and when Mrs. Peters, as she often did, urged him "to take a wife and be somebody," he answered quietly, "I am content to follow the example of my uncle. I shall probably never marry."

Still he was lonely in his great house—so lonely that, though it hurt his pride to do it, he wrote the letter, the answer to which excited him so terribly, and awoke with-

in his mind a train of thought so absorbing and intense, that he did not hear the summons to supper until Mrs. Peters put her head into the room, asking "if he were deaf or what."

Mrs. Peters had been in the elder Browning's household for years, and when the new owner came, she still continued at her post, and exercised over her young master a kind of motherly care, which he permitted because he knew her real worth, and that without her his home would be uncomfortable indeed. On the occasion of which we write, Mrs. Peters was unusually attentive, and to a person at all skilled in female tactics, it was evident that she was about to ask a favor, and had made preparations accordingly. His favorite waffles had been buttered exactly right—the peaches and cream were delicious—the fragrant black tea was neither too strong nor too weak—the fire blazed brightly in the grate—the light from the chandelier fell softly upon the massive silver service and damask cloth;—and with all these creature comforts around him, it is not strange that he forgot the letter and the tress of hair which so lately had blackened on the coals. The moment was propitious, and by the time he had finished his second cup, Mrs. Peters said, "I have some thing to propose."

Leaning back in his chair, he looked inquiringly at her, and she continued: "You remember Mrs. Leyton, the poor woman who had seen better days, and lived in East Granby?"

"Yes."

"You know she has been sick, and you gave me leave to carry her any thing I chose?"

"Yes."

"Well, she's dead, poor thing, and what is worse, she hain't no connection, nor never had, and her little daughter Rosamond hain't a place to lay her head."

"Let her come and sleep with you, then," said Mr. Browning, rattling his spoon upon the edge of his cup.

"Yes, and what'll she do days?" continued Mrs. Peters. "She can't run the streets, that's so; now, I don't believe no great in children, and you certainly don't b'lieve in 'em at all, nor your poor uncle before you; but Rosamond aint a child; she's *thirteen*—most a woman—and if you don't mind the expense, I shan't mind the trouble, and she can live here till she finds a place. Her mother, you know, took up millinering to get a living."

"Certainly, let her come," answered Mr. Browning, who was noted for his benevolence.

This matter being thus satisfactorily settled, Mrs. Peters arose from the table, while Mr. Browning went back to the olden memories which had haunted him so much that day, and with which there was not mingled a single thought of the little Rosamond, who was to exert so strong an influence upon his future life.

CHAPTER II.

ROSAMOND LEYTON.

ROSAMOND had been some weeks at Riverside, and during all that time Mr. Browning had scarcely noticed her at all. On the first day of her arrival he had spoken kindly to her, asking her how old she was, and how long her mother had been dead, and this was all the attention he had paid to her. He did not even yet know the color of her eyes, or texture of her hair,—whether it were curly or straight, black or brown; but he knew in various ways that she was there—knew it by the sound of dancing feet upon the stairs, which were wont to echo only to Mrs. Peters' heavy tread—knew it by the tasteful air his room suddenly assumed—by the ringing laugh and musical songs which came often from the kitchen, and by the thousand changes which the presence of a merry-hearted girl of thirteen brings to a hitherto silent house. Of him Rosamond stood considerably in awe, and though she could willingly have worshipped him for giving her so pleasant a home, she felt afraid of him and kept out of his way, watching him with childish curiosity at a distance, admiring his noble figure, and wondering if she would ever dare speak to him as fearlessly as Mrs. Peters did.

From this woman Rosamond received all a mother's care, and though the name of her lost parent was often on her lips, she was beginning to be very happy in her new home, when one day toward the middle of October,

Mrs. Peters told her that Mr. Browning's only sister, a Mrs. Van Vechten, who lived South, was coming to Riverside, together with her son Ben. The lady Mrs. Peters had never seen, but Ben, who was at school in Albany, had spent a vacation there, and she described him as a "great, good-natured fool," who cared for nothing but dogs, cigars, fast horses and pretty girls.

Rosamond pushed back the stray curls which had fallen over her face, glanced at the cracked mirror which gave her *two* noses instead of one, and thinking to herself, "I wonder if he'll care for me," listened attentively while Mrs. Peters continued,—“This Miss Van Vechten is a mighty fine lady, they say, and has heaps of niggers to wait on her at home,—but she can't bring 'em here, for *I* should set 'em free—that's so. I don't b'lieve in't. What was I sayin'? Oh, I know, she can't wait on herself, and wrote to have her brother get some one. He asked me if you'd be willin' to put on her clothes, wash her face, and *chaw her victuals* like enough.”

“Mr. Browning never said that,” interrupted Rosamond, and Mrs. Peters replied—“Well, not that exactly, but he wants you to wait on her generally.”

“I'll do any thing reasonable,” answered Rosamond. “When will she be here?”

“In two or three days,” said Mrs. Peters, “and I must hurry, or I shan't have them north chambers ready for her. Ben ain't coming quite so soon.”

The two or three days passed rapidly, and at the close of the third a carriage laden with trunks stopped before the gate at Riverside, and Mrs. Van Vechten had come. She was a thin, sallow-faced, proud-looking woman, wholly unlike her brother, whose senior she was by many years.

She had seen much of the world, and that she was conscious of her own fancied superiority was perceptible in every movement. She was Mrs. Richard Van Vechten, of Alabama—one of the oldest families in the state. Her deceased husband had been United States Senator—she had been to Europe—had seen the Queen on horseback—had passed the residence of the Duchess of Sutherland, and when Rosamond Leyton appeared before her in her neatly-fitting dress of black and asked what she could do for her, she elevated her eyebrows, and coolly surveying the little girl, answered haughtily, "Comb out my hair."

"Yes, I will," thought Rosamond, who had taken a dislike to the grand lady, and suiting the action to the thought, she did *comb out* her hair, pulling it so unmercifully that Mrs. Van Vechten angrily bade her stop.

"Look at me, girl," said she; "did you ever assist at any ones toilet before?"

"I've hooked Mrs. Peters' dress and pinned on Bridget's collar," answered Rosamond, her great brown eyes brimming with mischief.

"Disgusting!" returned Mrs. Van Vechten—"I should suppose Ralph would know better than to get me such an ignoramus. Were you hired on purpose to wait on me?"

"Why, no, ma'am—I live here," answered Rosamond.

"Live here!" repeated Mrs. Van Vechten, "and pray, what do you do?"

"Nothing much, unless I choose," said Rosamond, who, being a great pet with Mrs. Peters and the other servants, really led a very easy life at Riverside.

Looking curiously into the frank, open face of the young girl, Mrs. Van Vechten concluded she was never

intended to take a negro's place, and with a wave of her hand she said, "You may go; I can dress myself alone."

That evening, as the brother and sister sat together in the parlor, the latter suddenly asked, "Who is that Rosamond Leyton, and what is she doing here?"

Mr. Browning told her all he knew of the girl, and she continued, "Do you intend to educate her?"

"Educate her!" said he—"what made you think of that?"

"Because," she answered, with a sarcastic smile, "as you expect to do penance the rest of your lifetime, I did not know but you would deem it your duty to educate every beggar who came along."

The idea of educating Rosamond Leyton was new to Mr. Browning, but he did not tell his sister so—he merely said, "And suppose I do educate her?"

"In that case," answered the lady, "Ben will not pass his college vacations here, as I had intended that he should do."

"And why not?" asked Mr. Browning.

"Why not?" repeated Mrs. Van Vechten. "Just as though you did not know how susceptible he is to female beauty, and if you treat this Rosamond as an equal, it will be like him to fall in love with her at once. She is very pretty, you know."

Mr. Browning did not know any such thing. In fact, he scarcely knew how the young girl looked, but his sister's remark had awakened in him an interest, and after she had retired, which she did early, he rang the bell for Mrs. Peters, who soon appeared in answer to his call.

"Is Rosamond Leyton up," he asked.

"Yes, sir," answered Mrs. Peters, wondering at the question.

"Send her to me," he said, and with redoubled amazement Mrs. Peters carried the message to Rosamond, who was sitting before the fire, trying in vain to undo an obstinate knot in her boot-string.

"Mr. Browning sent for me!" she exclaimed, her cheeks flushing up. "Wants to scold me, I suppose, for pulling his sister's hair. I only did what she told me to," and with a beating heart she started for the parlor.

Rosamond was afraid of Mr. Browning, and feeling sure that he intended to reprove her, she took the chair nearest to the door, and covering her face with her hands, began to cry, saying—"It was ugly in me, I know, to pull Mrs. Van Vechten's hair, and I did it on purpose, too; but I won't do so again, I certainly won't."

Mr. Browning was confounded. This was the first intimation he had received of the *barberic* performance, and for a moment he remained silent, gazing at the little girl. Her figure was very slight, her feet and hands were very small, and her hair, though disordered now and rough, was of a beautiful brown, and fell in heavy curls around her neck. He saw all this at a glance, but her face, the point to which his attention was chiefly directed, he could not see until those little hands were removed, and as a means of accomplishing this he at last said, kindly—"I do not understand you, Rosamond. My sister has entered no complaint, and I did not send for you to censure you. I wish to talk with you—to get acquainted. Will you come and sit by me upon the sofa?"

Rosamond's hands came down from her face, but she did not leave her seat; neither did Mr. Browning now

wish to have her, for the light of the chandelier fell full upon her, giving him a much better view of her features than if she had been nearer to him. If, as Mrs. Peters had said, Ben Van Vechten was fond of pretty girls, he in a measure inherited the feeling from his uncle, who was an ardent admirer of the beautiful, and who now felt a glow of satisfaction in knowing that Rosamond Leyton was pretty. It was a merry, sparkling, little face which he looked upon, and though the nose did turn up a trifle, and the mouth was rather wide, the soft, brown eyes, and exquisitely fair complexion made ample amends for all. She was never intended for a menial—she would make a beautiful woman—and with thoughts similar to these, Mr. Browning, after completing his survey of her person, said—"Have you been to school much?"

"Always, until I came here," was her answer; and he continued—"And since then you have not looked in a book, I suppose?"

The brown eyes opened wide as Rosamond replied,—
"Why, yes I have. I've read ever so much in your library when you were gone. Mrs. Peters told me I might," she added hastily, as she saw his look of surprise, and mistook it for displeasure.

"I am perfectly willing," he said; "but what have you read? Tell me."

Rosamond was interested at once, and while her cheeks glowed and her eyes sparkled, she replied—"Oh, I've read Shakspeare's Historical Plays, every one of them—and Childe Harold, and Watts on the Mind, and Kenilworth, and now I'm right in the middle of the Lady of the Lake. Wasn't Fitz-James the King? I believe he

was. When I am older I mean to write a book just like that."

Mr. Browning could not forbear a smile at her enthusiasm, but without answering her question, he said,—
"What do you intend to do until you are old enough?"

Rosamond's countenance fell, and after tapping her foot upon the carpet awhile, she said, "Mrs. Peters will get me a place by-and-by, and I s'pose I'll have to be a milliner."

"Do you wish to be one?"

"Why, no; nor mother didn't either, but after father died she had to do something. Father was a kind of a lawyer, and left her poor."

"Do you wish to go away from here, Rosamond?"

There were tears on the long-fringed eye-lashes as the young girl replied, "No, sir; I'd like to live here always, but there's nothing for me to do."

"Unless you go to school. How would you like that?"

"I have no one to pay the bills," and the curly head shook mournfully.

"But I have money, Rosamond, and suppose I say that you shall stay here and go to school?"

"Oh, sir, *will* you say so? *May* I live with you always?" and forgetting her fear of him in her great joy, Rosamond Leyton crossed over to where he sat, and laying both her hands upon his shoulder, continued—"Are you in earnest, Mr. Browning? May I stay? Oh, I'll be so good to you when you are old and sick!"

It seemed to her that he was old enough to be her father, then, and it almost seemed so to him. Giving her a very paternal look, he answered, "Yes, child, you shall

stay as long as you like; and now go, or Mrs. Peters will be wondering what keeps you."

Rosamond started to leave the room, but ere she reached the door she paused, and turning to Mr. Browning, said, "You have made me *so* happy, and I like you so much, I wish you'd let me kiss your hand—may I?"

It was a strange question, and it sent the blood tingling to the very tips of Mr. Browning's fingers.

"Why, ye-es,—I don't know. What made you think of that?" he said, and Rosamond replied,—
"I always kissed father when he made me very happy. It was all I could do."

"But I am not your father," stammered Mr. Browning; "I shall not be twenty-five until November. Still you can do as you please."

"Not twenty-five yet," repeated Rosamond;—"why, I thought you were nearer *forty*. I don't believe I'd better, though I like you just as well. Good night."

He heard her go through the hall, up the stairs, through the upper hall, and then all was still again.

"What a strange little creature she is," he thought; "so childlike and frank, but how queer that she should ask to *kiss me*! Wouldn't Susan be shocked if she knew it, and won't she be horrified when I tell her I *am* going to educate the girl. I shouldn't have thought of it but for her. And suppose Ben does fall in love with her. If he knew a little more, it would not be a bad match. Some body must keep up our family, or it will become extinct. Susan and I are the only ones left, and *I*"—here he paused, and starting to his feet, he paced the floor hurriedly, nervously, as if seeking to escape from some pursuing evil. "It is terrible," he whispered, "but I *can*

bear it and will," and going to his room he sought his pillow to dream strange dreams of tresses black, and ringlets brown,—of fierce, dark eyes, and shining orbs, whose owner had asked to kiss his hand, and mistaken him for her sire.

CHAPTER III.

BEN'S VISIT.

THE next morning, as Mrs. Van Vechten was slowly making her toilet alone, there came a gentle rap at her door, and Rosamond Leyton appeared, her face fresh and blooming as a rose-bud, her curls brushed back from her forehead, and her voice very respectful, as she said—"I have come to ask your pardon for my roughness yesterday. I can do better, and if you will let me wait on you while you stay, I am sure I shall please you."

Mrs. Van Vechten could not resist that appeal, and she graciously accepted the girl's offer, asking her the while what had made the change in her behavior. Always frank and truthful, Rosamond explained to the lady that Mr. Browning's kindness had filled her with gratitude and determined her to do as she had done. To her Mrs. Van Vechten said nothing, but when she met her brother at the breakfast table, there was an ominous frown upon her face, and the moment they were alone she gave him her opinion without reserve. But Mr. Browning was firm. "He should have something to live for," he said, "and Heaven only knew the lonely hours he passed with no object in which to be interested. Her family, though unfortunate, are highly respectable," he added, "and if I can make her a useful ornament in society, it is my duty to do so."

Mrs. Van Vechten knew how useless it would be to remonstrate with him, and she gave up the contest, mentally resolving that "Ben should not pass his College vacations there."

When the villagers learned that Mr. Browning intended to educate Rosamond and treat her as his equal, they ascribed it wholly to the influence of his sister, who, of course, had suggested to him an act which seemed every way right and proper. They did not know how the lady opposed it, nor how, for many days, she maintained a cold reserve toward the young girl, who strove in various ways to conciliate her, and at last succeeded so far that she not only accepted her services at her toilet, but even asked of her sometimes to read her to sleep in the afternoon, a process neither long nor tedious, for Mrs. Van Vechten was not literary, and by the time the second page was reached she usually nodded her full acquiescence to the author's opinions, and Rosamond was free to do as she pleased.

One afternoon when Mrs. Van Vechten was fast asleep, and Rosamond deep in the "Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner," (the former having selected that poem as an opiate because of its musical jingle,) there was the sound of a bounding step upon the stairs, accompanied by the stirring notes of Yankee Doodle, which some one whistled at the top of his voice. Rosamond was about going to see who it was, when the door opened and disclosed to view a long lank, light-haired, good-natured looking youth, dressed in the extreme of fashion, with a huge gold chain dangling across his vest, and an immense diamond ring upon his little finger. This last he managed to show frequently by caressing his chin, where, by the aid of a microscope, a

very little down might possibly have been found! This was Ben! He had just arrived, and learning that his mother was in her room, had entered it unceremoniously. The unexpected apparition of a beautiful young girl startled him, and he introduced himself to her good graces by the very expressive exclamation, "*Thunder!* I beg your pardon, Miss," he continued, as he met her surprised and reproving glance. "You scared me so I didn't know what else to say. It's a favorite expression of mine, but I'll quit it, if you say so. Do you live here?"

"I wait upon your mother," was the quiet answer, which came near wringing from the young man a repetition of the offensive word.

But he remembered himself in time, and then continued, "How do you know she's my mother? You are right, though. I'm Ben Van Vechten—the veriest dolt in school, they say. But, as an offset, I've got a heart as big as an ox; and now, who are you? I know you are not a waiting-maid!"

Rosamond explained who she was, and then, rather pleased with his off-hand manner, began to question him concerning his journey, and so forth. Ben was delighted. It was not every girl who would of her own accord talk to him, and sitting down beside her, he told her twice that she was handsome, was cautiously winding his arm around her waist, when from the rosewood bedstead there came the sharp, quick word, "Benjamin!" and, unmindful of Rosamond's presence, Ben leaped into the middle of the room, ejaculating, "*Thunder!* mother, what do you want?"

"I want *her* to leave the room," said Mrs. Van Vechten, pointing toward Rosamond, who, wholly ignorant of the

nature of her offence, retreated hastily, wondering how she had displeased the capricious lady.

Although Ben Van Vechten would not have dared to do a thing in direct opposition to his mother's commands, he was not ordinarily afraid of her, and he now listened impatiently, while she told him that Rosamond Leyton was not a fit associate for a young man like himself, "She was a sort of nobody, whom her brother had undertaken to educate," she said, "and though she might be rather pretty, she was low-born and vulgar, as any one could see."

Ben confessed to a deficiency of eye-sight on that point, and then, as his mother showed no signs of changing the conversation, he left her abruptly, and sauntered off into the garden, where he came suddenly upon Rosamond, who was finishing the *Ancient Mariner* in the summer-house, her favorite resort.

"So we've met again," said he, "and a pretty lecture I've had on your account."

"Why on my account," asked Rosamond; and Ben, who never kept a thing to himself, told her in substance all his mother had said.

"She always wakes in the wrong time," said he, "and she saw me just as I was about to give you a little bit of a hug—so"—and he proceeded to demonstrate.

Rosamond's temper was up, and equally indignant at mother and son, she started to her feet, exclaiming, "I'd thank you, sir, to let me alone."

"Whew-ew," whistled Ben. "Spunky, ain't you. Now I rather like that. But pray don't burst a blood vessel. I've no notion of making love to you, if mother does think so. You are too small a girl."

"Too small a girl," repeated Rosamond, scornfully. "I'm *fourteen* to-morrow—quite too old to be insulted," and she darted away, followed by the merry laugh of the good-humored Ben.

Two hours before, Rosamond would not have been so excited, for though nearly fourteen, she was in thought and feeling a very child, as was proved by her asking to kiss her benefactor's hand; but Mrs. Van Vechten's remarks, repeated to her by Ben, had wrought in her a change, and, in some respects, transformed her into a woman at once. She did not care so much for the liberties Ben had attempted to take, but his mother's words rankled in her bosom, awakening within her a feeling of bitter resentment; and when, next day, the lady's bell rang out its summons for her to come, she sat still upon the door-steps and gave no heed.

"Rosamond," said Mrs. Peters, "Mrs. Van Vechten is ringing for you."

"Let her ring, I'm not going to wait on her any more," and Rosamond returned to the book she was reading.

Meantime, flurried and impatient, the lady above stairs pulled at the bell-rope, growing more nervous and angry with every pull, until at last, as she heard her brother's step in the hall, she went out to him and said, "I wish you'd send that girl to me. I've rung at least fifty times; and dare say she's enticing Ben again. I knew it would be so."

Going hurriedly down the stairs, Mr. Browning sought out Rosamond and said to her, "My sister is ringing for you."

"I know it, sir;" and the brown eyes, which heretofore

had seemed so soft and gentle, flashed upon him an expression which puzzled him.

"Then why do you not go?" he asked; and the young girl replied, "I shall not wait upon her any more."

"*Rosamond!*" said Mr. Browning. There was severity in the tone of his voice, and Rosamond roused at once.

"She says I am *vulgar*, and *low-born*, and have designs upon Ben," said she, "and it's a falsehood. My mother was as much a lady as she. I am *not* vulgar, and I hate Ben, and I won't stay here if I must wait on *her*. Shall I go away?"

If Rosamond left, the life of the house went with her. This Mr. Browning knew; but man-like, he did not wish to be conquered by a woman, and after questioning her as to the nature of Mrs. Van Vechten's offence, he answered, "My sister says some foolish things, I know, but it is my request that you attend to her while she stays, and I expect to be obeyed."

That last word was unfortunate, for Rosamond had a strong will of her own, and tapping her little foot upon the ground, she said saucily, "And suppose you are not obeyed?"

He did not tell her she must leave Riverside, but he said, "You must answer for your disobedience to me, who have certainly some right to control you;" then, fearing that his own high temper might be tried more than he chose to have it, he walked away just in time to avoid hearing her say, "she cared less for him than for his sister!"

Rosamond was too impulsive not to repent bitterly of her conduct; and though she persisted in leaving Mrs. Van Vechten to herself, and refused to speak to Ben,

whose face, in consequence, wore a most melancholy expression, she almost cried herself sick, and at last, startled Mrs. Peters, just as that lady was stepping into bed, by declaring that she must see Mr. Browning before she slept.

* * * * *

Mr. Browning sat in his library, alone. He did not usually retire early, but this night he had cause for wakefulness. The burst of passion he had witnessed in his protegee, had carried him back to a time when another than little Rosamond Leyton had laughed his wishes to scorn.

"And is it ever thus with them?" he said. "Are all women furies in disguise?—and Rosamond seemed so gentle, so good."

He did not hear the low knock on his door, for his thoughts were far away in the south-land, where he had learned his first lesson of womankind. Neither did he hear the light footfall upon the floor, but when a sweet, tearful voice said to him, "Mr. Browning, are you feeling so badly for me?" he started, and on a hassock at his feet saw Rosamond Leyton. The sight of her was unexpected, and it startled him for a moment, but soon recovering his composure, he said gently: "Why are you here? I supposed you were in bed."

Rosamond began to cry, and with her usual impetuosity replied, "I came to tell you how sorry I am for behaving so rudely to you. I do try to govern my temper so hard, but it sometimes gets the mastery. Won't you forgive me, sir? It wasn't Rosamond that acted so—it was a vile, wicked somebody else. Will you forgive me?" and in her dread that the coveted forgiveness might be withheld, she forgot that he was only *twenty-four*, and laid her head upon his knee, sobbing like a little child.

"Had *she* done like this, how different would my life have been," thought Mr. Browning, and involuntarily caressing the curly head, he was about to speak, when Rosamond interrupted him, saying,

"I won't deceive you, Mr. Browning, and make you think I'm better than I am. I am sorry I acted so to you, but I don't believe I'm sorry about Mrs. Van Vechten. I don't like her, for she always treats me as though I were not near as good as she, and I can't wait on her any more. Must I? Oh, don't make me," and she looked beseechingly into his face.

He could not help respecting her for that inborn feeling, which would not permit herself to be trampled down, and though he felt intuitively that she was having her own way after all, he assured her of his forgiveness, and then added: "Mrs. Van Vechten will not require your services, for she received a letter to-night, saying her presence was needed at home, and she leaves us to-morrow."

"*And Ben?*" she asked—"does he go, too?"

"He accompanies his mother to New York," Mr. Browning said, "and I believe she intends leaving him there with a friend, until his school commences again."

In spite of herself, Rosamond rather liked Ben, and feeling that she was the cause of his banishment from Riverside, her sympathy was enlisted for him, and she said, "If I were not here, Ben would stay. Hadn't you rather send me away?"

"No, Rosamond, no; I need you here," was Mr. Browning's reply, and then as the clock struck eleven, he bade her leave him, saying it was time children like her were in bed.

As he had said, Mrs. Van Vechten was going away,

and she came down to breakfast next morning in her traveling dress, appearing very unamiable, and looking very cross at Rosamond, with whom she finally parted without a word of reconciliation. Ben on the contrary, was all affability, and managed slyly to *kiss* her, telling her he should come there again in spite of his mother.

After their departure the household settled back into its usual monotonous way of living, with the exception that Rosamond, being promoted to the position of an equal, became, in many respects, the real mistress of Riverside, though Mrs. Peters nominally held the reins, and aside from superintending her work, built many castles of the future when her protegee would be a full grown woman and her master still young and handsome!

CHAPTER IV.

ROSAMOND'S EDUCATION.

ONE year has passed away since Mrs. Van Vechten departed for the South, and up the locust lined avenue which leads to Riverside, the owner of the place is slowly riding. It is not pleasant going home to-night, and so he lingers by the way, wondering why it is that the absence of a *child* should make so much difference in one's feelings! During the year Rosamond had recited her lessons to him, but with many others he fancied no girl's education could be finished unless she were *sent away*—and two weeks before the night of which we write he had taken her himself to Atwater Seminary, a distance of more than two hundred miles, and then, with a sense of desolation for which he could not account, he had returned to his home, which was never so lonely before. There was no merry voice within the walls,—no tripping feet upon the stairs,—no soft, white hand to bathe his forehead when suffering from real or fancied headaches,—no slippers waiting by his chair,—no flowers on the mantle,—no bright face at the window,—no Rosamond at the door.

Of all this was he thinking that November afternoon, and when at last he reached his house, he went straight to his library, hoping to find a letter there, telling him of her welfare. But letter there was none, and with a feeling of disappointment he started to the parlor. The door was ajar and he caught glimpses of a cheerfully blazing

fire within the grate. The shutters, too, were open and the curtains were put back just as they used to be when *she was there*. It seemed like the olden time, and with spirits somewhat enlivened he advanced into the room. His favorite chair stood before the fire, and so near to it that her head was leaning on its arm, sat a young girl. Her back was turned toward him, but he knew that form full well, and joyfully he cried, "Rosamond, how came you here?"

Amid her smiles and tears, Rosamond attempted to tell him the story of her grievances. She was homesick, and she could not learn half so much at the Atwater Seminary as at home—then, too, she hated the straight-jacket rules, and hated the lady-boarder, who pretended to be sick, and wouldn't let the school-girls breathe, especially Rosamond Leyton, for whom she seemed to have conceived a particular aversion.

Pleased as Mr. Browning was to have Rosamond with him again, he did not quite like her reasons for coming back, and he questioned her closely as to the cause of her sudden return.

"I shouldn't have come, perhaps," said Rosamond, "if that sick woman hadn't been so nervous and disagreeable. She paid enormous sums for her board, and so Mrs. Lindsey would hardly let us breathe for fear of disturbing her. My room was over hers, and I had to take off my shoes and walk on tip-toe, and even then she complained of me, saying I was rude and noisy, when I tried so hard to be still. I made some hateful remark about her in the hall, which she overheard, and when Mrs. Lindsey scolded me for it, saying she was a very wealthy lady from Florida, and accustomed to every attention at home, I said back

some pert things, I suppose, for she threatened to write and tell you, and so I thought I'd come and tell you myself."

There was a dizzy whirl in Mr. Browning's brain—a pallor about his lips—for a terrible suspicion had flashed upon him, and leaning forward, he said in a voice almost a whisper, "What was the Florida lady's name?"

"Potter, or Porter—yes, *Miss Porter*, that was it. But what is the matter? Are you sick?" Rosamond asked, as she saw how white he was.

"Only a sudden faintness. It will soon pass off," he said. "Tell me more of her. Did she see you? Were you near her?"

"No," answered Rosamond. "She was sick all the time I was there, and did not leave her room. The girls said, though, that she was rather pretty, but had big, black, evil-looking eyes. I don't know why it was, but I felt afraid of her—felt just as though she was my evil genius. I couldn't help it—but you *are* sick, Mr. Browning—you are pale as a ghost. Lie down upon the sofa, and let me bring the pillows, as I used to do."

She darted off in the direction of his sleeping-room, unconscious of the voice which called after her, asking if it were not dark in the hall, and bidding her take a light.

"But what does it matter?" he said, as he tottered to the sofa. *She* is not here. Atwater Seminary is two hundred miles away. She can't harm Rosamond now."

By this time Rosamond came with the pillows, which she arranged upon the sofa, making him lie down while she sat by, and laid her hand soothingly upon his burning forehead.

"We will have tea in here to-night," she said, "I told

Mrs. Peters so, and I will make it myself. Do you feel any better?" and she brought her rosy face so near to his that he felt her warm breath upon his cheek.

"Yes, I am better," he replied, "but keep your hand upon my forehead. It assures me of your presence, when my eyes are shut."

So Rosamond sat beside him, and when Mrs. Peters came in to lay the cloth, she found them thus together. Smiling knowingly, she whispered to herself, "Nater is the same every where," and the good lady bustled in and out, bringing her choicest bits and richest cake in honor of her pet's return. That night, freed from boarding-school restraint, Rosamond slept soundly in her own pleasant chamber, but to Ralph Browning, pacing up and down his room, there came not a moment of unconsciousness. He could not forget how near he had been to one who had embittered his whole life—nor yet how near to her young Rosamond had been, and he shuddered as if the latter had escaped an unseen danger. Occasionally, too, the dread thought stole over him, "suppose she should come here, and with her eagle eyes discover what, if it exist at all, is hidden in the inmost recesses of my heart."

But of this he had little fear, and when the morning came he was himself again, and, save that it was haggard and pale, his face gave no token of the terrible night he had passed. But what should he do with Rosamond? This was the question which now perplexed him. He had no desire to send her from him again, neither would she have gone if he had—and he at last came to the very sensible conclusion that the school in his own village was quite as good as any, and she accordingly became an at-

tendant at the Granby Female Seminary. Here she remained for two years and a half, over which time we will pass silently and introduce her again to our readers, when she is nearly eighteen—a graduate—a belle—and the sunshine of Riverside.

CHAPTER V.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

DURING the time which had elapsed since Ben Van Vechten first made the acquaintance of Rosamond, he had not once been to Riverside, for failing to enter college, and overwhelmed with mortification at his failure, he had returned to Alabama, from which place he wrote to her occasionally, always addressing her as a little girl, and speaking of himself as a very ancient personage in comparison with herself. But that Rosamond was now no longer a little girl, was proved by her finely rounded figure, her intelligent face, her polished manners and self-reliant air. And Rosamond was beautiful, too—so beautiful that strangers invariably asked *who* she was, turning always for a second look, when told she was the adopted sister or daughter—the villagers hardly knew which—of the wealthy Mr. Browning. But whether she were the daughter or the sister of the man with whom she lived, she was in reality the mistress of his household, and those who at first slighted her as the child of a milliner, now gladly paid her homage as one who was to be the heir of Mr. Browning's wealth. He would never marry her, the wise ones thought—would never marry anybody—and so, with this understanding, he was free to talk, walk, and ride with her as often as he chose. He liked her, the people said, but did not love her, while Rosamond her-

self believed he almost hated her, so strangely cold and harsh was his manner toward her at times.

This coldness had increased of late, and when the Lawries, who, next to Mr. Browning, were the most aristocratic people in the place, suggested that she should accompany them for a few weeks to the Springs, she was delighted with the plan, and nothing doubting that Mr. Browning would be glad to have her out of the way, she went to him for his consent. She found him in his library, apparently so absorbed in reading that he did not observe her approach until she stood between him and the light. Then he looked up quickly, and, as she fancied, an expression of displeasure passed over his face.

"Excuse me for disturbing you," she said, rather petulantly; "I have to break in upon your privacy if I would see you at all."

He gave her a searching glance, and then laying aside his book and folding his arms, said pleasantly, "I am at your service now, Miss Leyton. What is it you wish?"

Very briefly she stated her request, and then sitting down in the window, awaited his answer. It was not given immediately, and when he did speak, he said—"Rosamond, do you wish to go?"

"Of course I do," she replied, "I want to go where it is not as lonesome as I find it here."

"Lonesome, Rosamond, lonesome," he repeated, "Riverside has never been lonesome since—" he paused a moment and then added, "since you came here."

The shadow disappeared from Rosamond's face, as she replied—"I did not suppose you cared to have me here. I thought you did not like me."

"Not like you, Rosamond?" and over his fine features

there came a look of pain, which increased as Rosamond continued;—"You are so cold at times, and shun me as it were; inventing excuses to drive me from you when you know I would rather stay."

"Oh, Rosamond," he groaned, "how mistaken you are. The world would be to me a blank were it not for you; and if my manner is sometimes cold and cruel, it is because stern duty demands it should be so. I cannot lay bare my secret heart to you of all others, but could you know me as I am, you would censure much, but pity more." He paused a moment, then, scarcely knowing what he said, he continued—"Rosamond, we will understand each other. *I shall never marry*—never *can* marry. In your intercourse with me, will you always remember that?"

"Why, yes," answered Rosamond, puzzled to comprehend him. "I'll remember that you say so, but it is not likely you'll keep your word."

"I am not trifling with you," he said. "Marriage is not for *me*. There is a dreadful reason why I cannot marry, and if at times I am cold toward you, it is because—because——"

Rosamond's eyes were riveted upon his face;—darker and darker they grew, becoming at last almost black in their intensity. She was beginning to understand him, and coloring crimson, she answered bitterly, "I know what you would say, but you need have no fears, for I never aspired to that honor. Rosamond Leyton has yet to see the man she could love."

"Rosamond," and Mr. Browning's voice was so low, so mournful in its tone that it quelled the angry feelings in the young girl's bosom, and she offered no resistance

when he came to her side and took her hand in his, saying as he did so—"Listen to me. You came here a little girl, and at first I did not heed you, but you made your presence felt in various ways, until at last I thought I could not live without you. You are a young lady now—the world calls you beautiful. To me you are beautiful. Oh, *so* beautiful," and he laid one hand upon her shining hair, softly, tenderly, nay, proudly, as if she had been his child. "I am not old yet, and it would be natural that we should love each other, but we must not—we cannot."

"And lest I should love you too well, you have tried to make me hate you," interrupted Rosamond, trying in vain to release herself from his powerful grasp, and adding, "but you can spare yourself the trouble. I like you too well to hate you; but as I live, I would not marry you if I could. I mean what I say!"

He released her hand, and returning to his chair, laid his head upon the table, while she continued—"I know just about how well you like me—how necessary I am to your comfort, and since fate has decreed that we should be thrown together, let us contribute to each other's happiness as far as in us lies. I will think of you as a brother, if you like, and you shall treat me as a sister, until somebody takes me off your hands. Now, I can't say *I* shall never marry, for I verily believe I shall. Meantime, you must think of me just as you would if you had a wife. Is it a bargain, Mr. Browning?"

She spoke playfully, but he knew she was in earnest, and from his inmost soul he blessed her for having thus brought the conversation to a close. He would not tell her why he had said to her what he had—it was not what he intended to say, and he knew she was in a measure de-

ceived, but he could not explain to her now; he could not tell her that he trembled for himself far more than for her, and it was not for her then to know how much he loved her, nor how that love was wearing his life away because of its great sin. He was growing old now very fast. The shadows of years were on his brow, and Rosamond almost fancied she saw his brown locks turning white. She was a warm-hearted, impulsive girl, and going toward him, she parted from his forehead the hair, streaked with grey, saying softly to him, "Shall it not be so? May I be your sister?"

"Yes, Rosamond, yes," was his answer; and then, wishing to bring him back to the point from which they started, Rosamond said abruptly—"And what of the Springs? Can I go?"

The descent was a rapid one, but it was what he needed, and lifting up his head, he replied, just as he had done before, "Do you want to go?"

"Not as much as I did when I thought you were angry, and if you would rather, I had quite as lief stay with you."

"Then stay," he said, "and we will have no more misunderstandings."

The next evening, as he sat alone in the parlor, a servant brought to him a letter, the superscription of which made him reel, as if he would have fallen to the floor. It was nearly four years since he had seen that hand-writing—he had hoped never to look upon it again—but it was there before his eyes, and she who wrote that letter was coming to Riverside—"would be there in a few days, Providence permitting. Do not commit suicide on my account," she wrote, "for I care as little as yourself to

have our secret divulged, and unless I find that you are after other *prey*, I shall keep my own counsel."

The letter dropped from his nerveless fingers—the objects in the room swam before his eyes, and like one on whom a crushing weight has fallen, he sat bewildered, until the voice of Rosamond aroused him, and fleeing to his chamber he locked the door, and then sat down to think. She was coming to Riverside, and wherefore? He did not wish for a reconciliation now—he would rather live there just as he was, with Rosamond.

"Nothing will escape her," he said; "those basilisk eyes will see every thing—will ferret out my love for that fair young girl. Oh, Heaven, *is* there no escape!"

He heard the voice of Anna Lawrie in the yard. She was coming for Rosamond's decision, and quick as thought he rang the bell, bidding the servant who appeared to send Miss Leyton to him.

"Rosamond," he said, when she came to the door, "I have changed my mind. You must go to the Springs."

"But I'd rather stay at home—I do not wish to go," she said.

"I say you *must*. So tell Miss Lawrie you will," he answered, and his eyes flashed almost savagely upon her.

Rosamond waited for no more. She had discovered the impediment to his marrying. It was *hereditary insanity*, and she had seen the first signs of it in him herself! Magnanimously resolving never to tell a human being, nor let him be chained if she could help it, however furious he might become, she went down to Miss Lawrie, telling her she would go.

One week from that day was fixed upon for their departure, and during that time Rosamond was too much

absorbed in dresses and finery to pay much heed to Mr. Browning. Of one thing she was sure, though—he was *crazy*; for what else made him stalk up and down the gravel-walk, his head bent forward, and his hands behind him, as if intently thinking. Once, when she saw him thus, she longed to go out to him, to tell him she knew his secret, and that she would never leave him, however unmanageable he should become! But his manner toward her now was so strange that she dared not, and she was almost as glad as himself when at last the morning came for her to go.

"Promise me one thing," he said, as they stood together a moment alone. "Don't write until you hear from me, and don't come home until I send for you."

"And suppose the Lawries come, what then?" she asked, and he replied, "No matter; stay until I write. Here are five hundred dollars in case of an emergency," and he thrust a check into her hand. "Stop," he continued, as the carriage came round—"did you put your clothes away where no one can see them, or are you taking them all with you?"

"Why no, why should I?" she answered. "Ain't I coming back?"

"Yes, yes—Heaven only knows," he said. "Oh, Rosamond, it may be I am parting with you forever, and at such a moment, is it a sin for you to kiss me? You asked to do so once. Will you do it now?"

"I will," she replied, and she kissed, unhesitatingly, his quivering lips.

The Lawries were at the door—Mrs. Peters also—and forcing down his emotion, he bade her a calm good-bye. The carriage rolled away, but ere its occupants were six

miles from Riverside, every article of dress which had belonged to Rosamond had disappeared from her room, which presented the appearance of any ordinary bed-chamber, and when Mrs. Peters, in great alarm, came to Mr. Browning, asking what he supposed had become of them, he answered quietly—"I have put them in my private closet and locked them up!"

CHAPTER VI.

MARIE PORTER.

THE Hotels were crowded with visitors. Every apartment at — Hall, from basement to attic, was full, save two small rooms, eight by ten, so dingy and uncomfortable, that only in cases of emergency were they offered to guests. These, from necessity, were taken by the Lawries, but for Rosamond there was scarcely found a standing point, unless she were willing to share the apartment of a sick lady, who had graciously consented to receive any genteel, well-bred person, who looked as though they would be quiet and not rummage her things more than once a day!

"She was a very high-bred woman," the obsequious attendant said, "and her room the best in the house; she would not remain much longer, and when she was gone the young lady could have it alone, or share it with her companions. It contained two beds, of course, besides a few *nails* for dresses."

"Oh, do take it," whispered the younger Miss Lawrie, who was not yet thoroughly versed in the *pleasures* of a watering place, and who cast rueful glances at her cheerless *pen*, so different from her airy chamber at home.

So Rosamond's trunks were taken to No. 20, whither she herself followed them. The first occupant, it would seem, was quite an invalid, for though it was four in the afternoon, she was still in bed. Great pains, however,

had evidently been taken with her toilet, and nothing could have been more perfect than the arrangement of her pillows—her hair—her wrapper, and the crimson shawl she wore about her shoulders. Rosamond bowed to her politely, and then, without noticing her particularly, went over to the side of the room she supposed was to be hers. She had just lain aside her hat when the lady said, "That open blind lets in too much light. Will you please shut it Miss — I don't know what to call you."

"Miss Leyton," answered Rosamond, "and you are—"

"Miss Porter," returned the speaker.

"Rosamond started quickly, for she remembered the name, and looking for the first time directly at the lady, she met a pair of large black eyes fixed inquiringly upon her.

"Leyton—Leyton," repeated the lady, "where have I heard of you before?"

"At Atwater Seminary, perhaps," suggested Rosamond, a little doubtful as to the manner in which her intelligence would be received.

A shadow flitted over the lady's face, but it was soon succeeded by a smile, and she said graciously, "Oh, yes, I know. You annoyed me and I annoyed you. It was an even thing, and since we are thrown together again, we will not quarrel about the past. Ain't you going to close that blind? The light shines full in my face, and, as I did not sleep one wink last night, I am looking horribly to-day."

"Excuse me, madam," said Rosamond, "I was so taken by surprise that I forgot your request," and she proceeded to shut the blind.

This being done, she divested herself of her soiled gar-

ments, washed her face, brushed her curls, and was about going in quest of her companions, when the lady asked if she had friends there. Rosamond replied that she had, at the same time explaining how uncomfortable they were.

"The Hotel is full," said the lady, "and they all envy me my room; but if I pay for the best, I am surely entitled to the best. I shall not remain here long, however. Indeed, I did not expect to be here now, but sickness overtook me. I dare say I am the subject of many anxious thoughts to the person I am going to visit."

There was a half-exultant expression upon the lady's face as she uttered these last words, but in the darkened room, Rosamond did not observe it. She was sorry for one thus detained against her will, and leaning against the foot-board, she said, "You suffer a great deal from ill health, do you not? Have you always been an invalid?"

"Not always. I was very healthy once, but a great trouble came upon me, shocking my nervous system terribly, and since then I have never seen a well day. I was young when it occurred—about your age, I think. How old are you, Miss Leyton?"

"I am eighteen next October," was Rosamond's reply, and the lady continued, "I was older than that. Most nineteen. I am twenty-eight now."

Rosamond did not know *why* she said it, but she rejoined quickly, "Twenty-eight, So is Mr. Browning!"

"Who?" exclaimed the lady, the tone of her voice so sharp—so loud and earnest, that Rosamond was startled, and did not answer for an instant.

When she did, she said, "I beg your pardon; it is Mr. Browning who is twenty-eight."

"Ah, yes, I did not quite understand you. I'm a little hard of hearing. Who is Mr. Browning?"

The voice had assumed its usually soft, smooth tone, and Rosamond could not see the rapid beatings of the heart, nor the eager curiosity lurking in the glittering black eyes. The lady *seemed* indifferent, and smoothed carelessly the rich Valenciennes lace, which edged the sleeve of her cambric wrapper.

"Did you tell me who Mr. Browning was, dear?" and the black eyes wandered over the counterpane, looking everywhere but at Rosamond, so fearful was their owner lest they should betray the interest she felt in the answer.

"Mr. Browning," said Rosamond, "is—is—I hardly know what he is to me. I went to his house to live when I was a little, friendless orphan, and he very kindly educated me, and made me what I am. I live with him still at Riverside."

"Ye-es—Riverside—beau-ti-ful name—his country-seat—I—sup-pose," the words dropped syllable by syllable from the white lips, but there was no quiver in the voice—no ruffle upon her face.

Raising herself upon her elbow, the lady continued, "Pray don't think me fidgety, but won't you please open that shutter. I did not think it would be so dark. There, that's a good girl. Now, come and sit by me on the bed, and tell me of Riverside. Put your feet in the chair, or take this pillow. There, turn a little more to the light. I like to see people when they talk to me."

Rosamond complied with each request, and then, never dreaming of the close examination to which her face was subjected, she began to speak of her beautiful home—

describing it minutely, and dwelling somewhat at length upon the virtues of its owner.

"You like him very much," the lady said, nodding a little affirmative nod to her own question.

"Yes, very—very much," was Rosamond's answer; and the lady continued, "And *Mrs.* Browning? Do you like her, too?"

"There is no *Mrs.* Browning," returned Rosamond, adding quickly, as she saw in her auditor's face an expression she did not understand, "but it is perfectly proper I should live there, for *Mrs.* Peters, the housekeeper, has charge of me."

"Perhaps, then, he will marry you," and the jeweled hands worked nervously under the crimson shawl.

"Oh, no, he won't," said Rosamond, decidedly, "he's too old for me. Why, his hair is turning gray!"

"That's nothing," answered the lady, a little sharply. "Everybody's hair turns early now-a-days. Sarah found three or four silver threads in mine, this morning. Miss Leyton, don't you love Mr. Browning?"

"Why, yes," Rosamond began, and the face upon the pillow assumed a dark and almost fiendish expression. "Why, yes, I love him as a brother, but nothing else. I respect him for his goodness, but it would be impossible to love him with a marrying love."

The fierce expression passed away, and Miss Porter was about to speak when Anna Lawrie sent for Rosamond, who excused herself and left the room, thinking that, after all, she should like her old enemy of Atwater Seminary very much.

Meantime "the enemy" had buried her face in her pillows, and clenching her blue veined fists, struck at the

empty air, just as she would have struck at the owner of Riverside had he been standing there.

"Fine time he has of it," she muttered, "living there with her, and she so young and beautiful. I could have strangled her—the jade!—when she sat here talking so enthusiastically to *me, of him!* And she loves him, too. I know she does, though she don't know it herself. But I must be wary. I must seem to like this girl—must win her confidence—so I can probe her heart to its core, and if I find they love each other!"—she paused a moment, then grinding her teeth together, added slowly, as if the sound of her voice were musical and sweet, "Marie Porter will be avenged!"

That strange woman could be a demon or an angel, and as the latter character suited her just now, Rosamond, on her return to her room, found her all gentleness and love.

That night, when all around the house was still, the full moon shone down upon a scene which would have chilled the blood of Ralph Browning and made his heart stand still. Upon a single bedstead near the window Rosamond Leyton lay calmly sleeping—her brown curls floating o'er the pillow—her cheeks flushed with health and beauty—her lips slightly apart and her slender hands folded gracefully upon her bosom. Over her a fierce woman bent—her long, black hair streaming down her back—her eyes blazing with passion—her face the impersonation of malignity and hate; and there she stood, a vulture watching a harmless dove. Rosamond was dreaming of her home, and the ogress, standing near, heard her murmur, "dear Mr. Browning."

For a moment Marie Porter stood immovable—then

gliding back to her own couch, she whispered, "It is as I believed, and now if *he* loves *her*, the time I've waited for so long has come."

All that night she lay awake, burning with excitement and thirsting for revenge, and when the morning came, the illness was not feigned which kept her in her bed and wrung from her cries of pain. She was really suffering now, and during the next few days, Rosamond staid almost constantly at her side, administering to her wants, and caring for her so tenderly that hatred died out of the woman's heart, and she pitied the fair young girl, for in those few days she had learned what Rosamond did not know herself, though she was gradually waking up to it now. It was a long time since she had been separated from Mr. Browning, and she missed him so much, following him in fancy through the day, and at night wondering if he were thinking of her, and wishing he could hear the sound of her voice singing to him as she was wont to do when the twilight was over the earth. Anon there crept into her heart a feeling she could not define—a feverish longing to be where he was—a sense of desolation and terrible pain when she thought of his insanity, and the long, dreary years which might ensue when he would lose all knowledge of her. She did not care to talk so much of him now, but Miss Porter cared to have her, and caressingly winning the girl's confidence, learned almost everything—learned that there was an impediment to his marrying, and that Rosamond believed that impediment to be *hereditary insanity*—learned that he was often fitful and gloomy, treating his ward sometimes with coldness, and again with the utmost tenderness. Of the interview in the library Rosamond did not tell, but she told of every

thing else—of his refusing to let her come to the Springs, and then compelling her, against her will, to go; and Marie Porter, holding the little hands in hers, and listening to the story, read it all, and read it aright, gloating over the anguish she knew it cost Ralph Browning to see that beautiful girl each day and know he must not win her.

"But I pity *her*," she said, "for there is coming to her a terrible awakening."

Then, for no other reason than a thirst for excitement, she longed to see that awakening, and one day when they sat together alone, she took Rosamond's hand in hers, and examining its scarcely legible lines, said, half playfully, half seriously, "Rosamond, people have called me a fortune-teller. I inherited the gift from my grandmother, and though I do not pretend to much skill, I can surely read your destiny. You *love* Mr. Browning. I have known that all along. You think of him by day—you dream of him by night, and no thought is half so sweet as the thought of going home to him. But, Rosamond, you will not marry him. There is an impediment, as you say, but not insanity. I cannot tell you what it is, but I can see," and she bent nearer to the hand which trembled in her own. "I can see that for you to marry him, or—mark me, Rosamond—for you even to love him, is a most wicked thing—a dreadful sin in the sight of Heaven, and you must forget him—will you?"

Rosamond had laid her face upon the bed and was sobbing hysterically, for Miss Porter's manner frightened her even more than her words. In reply to the question, "Will you?" she at last answered passionately, "*No, I won't!*" It is *not* wicked to love him as I do. I am his *sister*, nothing more."

Miss Porter's lip curled scornfully a moment, and then she said, "Let me tell you the story of *my* life, shall I?"

No answer from Rosamond, and the lady continued: "When I was about your age I fancied I loved a man who, I think, must have been much like Mr. Browning——"

"No, no," interrupted Rosamond. "Nobody was ever like Mr. Browning. I don't want to hear the story. I don't want any thing but to go home."

I will not tell her until it's more necessary, thought Miss Porter, but if I mistake not she will go home much sooner than she anticipates. And she was right, for on that very night Mr. Browning sat reading a letter which ran as follows:

"I find myself so happy with *your little* Rosamond, who chances to be my room-mate, that I have postponed my visit to Riverside until some future time, which, if you continue neutral, may never come—but the moment you trespass on forbidden ground, or breathe a word of love into *her* ear—beware! She loves *you*. I have found that out, and I tell it because I know it will not make your life more happy, or your punishment easier to bear!"

He did not shriek—he did not faint—he did not move—but from between his teeth two words came like a burning hiss, "Curse her!" Then, seizing his pen, he dashed off a few lines, bidding Rosamond "not to delay a single moment, but to come home at once."

"She knows it all," he said, "and now, if *she* comes here, it will not be much worse. I can but die, let what will happen."

This letter took Rosamond and the Lawries by surprise,

but not so Miss Porter. She expected it, and when she saw how eager Rosamond was to go, she smiled a hard, bitter smile, and said, "I've a half a mind to go with you."

"What! where? To *Riverside*?" asked Rosamond, suspending her preparations for a moment, and hardly knowing whether she were pleased or not.

"Yes, to *Riverside*," returned Miss Porter, "though on the whole, I think I'd better not. Mr. Browning may not care to see me. If he does, you can write and let me know. Give him my love, and say that if you had not described him as so incorrigible an old bach, I might be coming there to try my powers upon him. I am *irresistible in my diamonds*. Be sure and tell him that; and stay, Rosamond, I must give you some little token of my affection. What shall it be?" and she feigned to be thinking.

Most cruel must her thoughts have been, and even she hesitated a moment ere she could bring herself to such an act. Then with a contemptuous "Pshaw!" she arose and opening her jewel box took from a private drawer a plain gold ring, bearing date nine years back, and having inscribed upon it simply her name "Marie." This she brought to Rosamond, saying, "I can't wear it now;—my hands are too thin and bony, but it just fits you,—see—" and she placed it upon the third finger of Rosamond's left hand!

Rosamond thanked her,—admired the chaste beauty of the ring and then went on with her packing, while the wicked woman seated herself by the window and leaning her head upon her hands tried to quiet the voice of conscience which cried out against the deed she had done.

"It does not matter," she thought. "That tie was

severed years ago,—by his own act, too. The ring shall go. But will he see it! Men do not always observe such things," and then, lest he should not quaff the cup of bitterness prepared for him, she wrote on a tiny sheet of gilt-edged paper, "Look on Rosamond's third finger!"

This she carefully sealed and gave to Rosamond, bidding her hand it to Mr. Browning, and saying in answer to her look of inquiry, "It is about a little matter concerning yourself. He can show it to you, if he thinks proper!"

"The omnibus, Miss, for the cars," cried a servant at the door, and with a hurried good-bye to her friends, Rosamond departed and was soon on her way to *Riverside*.

CHAPTER VII.

MAKING LOVE.

AN accident had occurred to the downward train, and Rosamond was detained upon the road for a long time, so that it was already dark when she reached the Granby depot. Wishing to surprise Mr. Browning, she started for home on foot, leaving her trunks in charge of the baggage master. All around the house was still, and stepping into the hall she was about passing up the stairs, when the parlor door suddenly opened, throwing a glare of light upon her face. The same instant some one caught her round the neck, and kissing her twice, only released her when she exclaimed, "*Mr. Browning*, I am surprised at you!"

"Mr. Browning! *Thunder!* Just as though I was my uncle!" cried a familiar voice, and looking at the speaker, Rosamond recognized *Ben Van Vechten*! He had come to Riverside the day previous, he said, and hearing she was expected, had waited at the depot four mortal hours, and then returned in disgust.

"But how did you know me?" she asked, and he replied, "By your daguerreotype, of course. There is but one such beautiful face in the whole world."

He was disposed to be complimentary, and Rosamond was not sorry when his mother appeared, for in her presence he was tolerably reserved. Mrs. Van Vechten greeted Rosamond politely, but the old hauteur was there,

and her manner seemed to say, "If you are educated and refined, I can't forget that you were once my waiting-maid."

"Where is Mr. Browning?" asked Rosamond, and *Ben* replied, "Oh, up in his den having the shakes. He mopes there all the time. Can't you break him of the blues?"

"I'll go and try," answered Rosamond, and she started up the stairs, followed by *Ben*, whose mother called him back, bidding him, in a low voice, "stay where he was, and not make a fool of himself."

She could trust her *brother*, but not her *son*, and she thus did the former the greatest favor she could have done—she let him meet young Rosamond Leyton alone. The evening was quite chilly for July, and as, since the receipt of Miss Porter's note, Mr. Browning had seemed rather agueish, there was a fire burning in the grate, and it cast its shadows upon him as he sat in his accustomed chair. His back was toward the door, and he knew nothing of Rosamond's return until two, soft, white hands were placed before his eyes, and a voice which tried to be unnatural, said, "Guess who I am."

"Rosamond—darling—have you come back to me again?" he exclaimed, and starting up, he wound his arm about her, and looked into her face, expecting, momentarily, to hear her say, "Yes, I know it all."

But Rosamond did not say so. She merely told him how glad she was to be at home once more, in her delight forgetting that Marie Porter had said she loved the man who held her closely to his side and smoothed her wavy hair, even while his heart throbbed painfully with memories of the past and trembled for the future. He longed

to speak of her room-mate, but he dared not betray his knowledge of her existence, and he sat there waiting, yet dreading to hear the hated name.

"Did you room alone?" he asked at last, and now remembering the words, "You do love him," Rosamond moved quickly from his side. "She does know," he thought, and a silent moan of anguish died upon his lips. But Rosamond did not know—the movement was actuated by mere maidenly reserve, and sitting down directly opposite him, she told him of Miss Porter, whom she said she liked so well.

"How much of an invalid is she?" asked Mr. Browning, when he could trust his voice to speak.

"Her health is miserable," returned Rosamond. "She has the heart disease, and her waiting-maid told me she was liable to die at any time if unusually excited."

It might have been because Rosamond was there that Mr. Browning thought the room was brighter than it had been before, and quite calmly he listened while she told him more of her new friend.

"She seemed so interested in you, and in Riverside," said Rosamond, "and even proposed coming home with me——"

Mr. Browning started suddenly, and as suddenly a coal snapped out upon the carpet. This was an excuse for his movement, and Rosamond continued, "She thought, though, you might not care to see her, being a stranger, but she sent you *her love*, and —— You are cold, ain't you, Mr. Browning? You shiver like a leaf. Ben said you'd had the ague."

Rosamond closed the door and commenced again. "Where was I? Oh, I know. She said if you were not

a confirmed bachelor she would try her powers on you. '*She was irresistible in her diamonds*,' she bade me tell you. But *have* you an ague chill, really? or what makes your teeth chatter so? Shall I ring for more coal?"

"No, Rosamond, no. Fire does not warm me; I shall be better soon."

Rosamond pitied him, he looked so white and seemed to be suffering so much, and she remained silent for a time. Then remembering the note, she handed it to him, and turning toward the fire, stooped down to fix a bit of coal which was in danger of dropping from the grate. While in this attitude a cry between a howl of rage and a moan of anguish fell upon her ear—her shoulders were grasped by powerful hands, and looking up she saw Mr. Browning, his face distorted with passion and his flashing eyes riveted upon the *ring* glittering in the firelight. Seizing her hand, he wrenched it from her finger, and glanced at the name—then, swift as thought, placed it upon the marble hearth, and crushed it with his heel.

"It's mine—you've broken it," cried Rosamond, but he did not heed her, and gathering up the pieces, he hurled them into the grate—then, pale as ashes, sank panting into the nearest chair.

Rosamond was thunder-struck. She did not suppose he had had time to read the note; and never dreaming there was any connection between that and his strange conduct, she believed him to be raving mad, and her first impulse was to fly. Her second thought, however, was, "I will not leave him. He has these fits often, now, I know, and that is why he sent for me. He knew I could quiet him, and I will."

So Rosamond staid, succeeding so far in soothing him,

that his eyes lost their savage gleam, and were suffused with a look of unnatural tenderness when they rested on her face. He did not ask her how she came by the ring, for he knew it had been sent as an insult to him, and he felt a glow of satisfaction in knowing that it was blackening on the grate. Ben's voice was now heard in the hall, asking if they intended staying there all night, and in a whisper Mr. Browning bade Rosamond go down and apologize for him. She accordingly descended to the parlor, telling Mrs. Van Vechten that her brother was too much indisposed to come down, and wished to be excused. Mrs. Van Vechten bowed coolly, and taking a book of prints, busied herself for awhile in examining them; then the book dropped from her hand—her head fell back—her mouth fell open, and Ben, who was anxiously watching her, knew by unmistakable sounds that she was fast asleep. It was now his time, and faithfully did he improve it, devoting himself so assiduously to Rosamond, that she was glad when a *snore*, louder and more prolonged than any which had preceded it, started the lady herself, and produced symptoms of returning consciousness.

The next day, and the next, it was the same, and at the expiration of a week, Ben had determined either to marry Rosamond Leyton, or go to the *Crimean War*, this last being the bugbear with which he intended frightening his mother into a consent. He hardly dared disobey her openly for fear of disinheritorship, and he would rather she should express her willingness to receive Miss Leyton as her daughter. He accordingly startled her one day by asking her to sanction his intended proposal to the young girl. Nothing could exceed Mrs. Van Vechten's amaze-

ment and contempt. She would never consent, and if Ben persisted in making so disgraceful an alliance, she would disinherit him at once. Ben knew she was in earnest, and so fell back upon the Crimean war as a last resort. "He would go immediately—would start that very day for New York—he had money enough to carry him there," and he painted so vividly "death on a distant battle-field, with a ferocious *Russian* rifling his trowsers' pocket," that his mother began to cry, though she still refused to relent.

"Choose, mother, choose," said he. "It's almost car time—Rosamond or the war," and he drew on his heavy boots.

"Oh, Benjamin, you will kill me dead."

"I know it. I mean to. Rosamond or the war!" and he buttoned up his coat preparatory to a start.

"Do, Ben, listen to reason."

"I won't—I won't;—Rosamond or the war! I shall rush into the thickest of the fight, and be killed the first fire, of course, and black is so unbecoming to you."

"Stop, I intreat. You know you are afraid of cannons;" this was said beseechingly.

"Thunder, mother! No, I ain't! Rosamond or the war—choose quick. I hear the whistle at East Granby."

He left the room—went down the stairs, out at the door, through the yard, and out into the avenue, while his distracted mother looked after him through blinding tears. She knew how determined he was when once his mind was made up, and she feared his present excitement would last until he was fairly shipped, and it was too late to return. He would never fight, she was sure, and at the first battle-sound he would fly, and be hung as a

deserter, no doubt! This touched her pride. She would rather people should say of her boy that he married a milliner's daughter than that he was hung, and hurrying to the window just as Ben looked back, hoping for a signal, she waved her hand for him to return, calling out at the top of her voice, "I relent—I relent."

"I knew the *Crimea* would fetch her," said Ben; "lucky I thought of that," and without going to his mother at all, he sought out Rosamond. Half an hour later he astonished the former by rushing into her presence, and exclaiming, "She's refused me, mother; and she meant it, too. Oh, *I shall die*—I know I shall. Oh, oh, oh!" and Ben rolled on the floor in his frantic grief. As nearly as she could, Mrs. Van Vechten learned the particulars of his interview with Rosamond, and, though at first secretly pleased that he had been refused, she felt a very little piqued that her son should thus be dishonored, and when she saw how wretched it had made him, her feelings were enlisted in his behalf, and she tried to soothe him by saying that her brother had a great deal of influence with Rosamond, and they would refer the matter to him.

"Go now, mother. Don't wait a minute," pleaded Ben, and Mrs. Van Vechten started for her brother's library.

She found him alone, and disclosed the object of her visit at once. Rosamond had refused her son, who, in consequence, was nearly distracted, and threatened going to the Crimean war—a threat she knew he would execute unless her brother persuaded Rosamond to revoke her decision, and think again.

Mr. Browning turned as white as marble, but his sister

was too much absorbed in her own matters to heed his emotions, and she continued—

"Of course it will be mortifying to us all to have her in the family, and maybe Ben will get over it; but they must be engaged somehow, or he'll go away. I'll send her up to you immediately," and she hurriedly left the room in quest of Rosamond. For a moment Mr. Browning sat like one stupefied; then, covering his face with his hands, he moaned, "Must *this* come upon me, too? Must I, who love her so madly, bid her marry another? And yet what does it matter? She can never be mine—and if she marries Ben I can keep them with me always, and that vile woman will have no cause for annoying me. She said Rosamond loved me, but I pray Heaven that may not be so."

A light tread echoed in the hall, and with each fall of those little feet, Ralph Browning's heart throbbed painfully. Another moment and Rosamond was there with him—her cheeks flushed—her eyelashes wet with tears, and her whole manner betrayed an unusual degree of excitement.

"I understand from your sister," said she, "that you wish me to marry *Ben*, or leave your house. I will do the latter, but the former—never! Shall I consider our interview at an end?"

She turned to leave the room, but Mr. Browning caught her dress, exclaiming, "Stay, Rosamond, and hear me. I never uttered such words to Mrs. Van Vechten. I do not wish you to marry Ben, unless you love him. Do you love him, Rosamond? Do you love any body?"

This was not what he intended to say—but he had said it, and now he waited for her answer. To the first ques-

tion it came in a decided "No, I do not love him," and to the last it came in burning blushes, stealing over her cheek—her forehead—her neck, and speaking in her downcast eye. She had never believed that she did love her guardian, until told that he wished her to marry another, when it burst upon her in all its force, and she could no more conceal it now than she could stop the rapid beatings of her heart. He saw it all in her tell-tale face, and forgetting every thing, he wound his arms around her, and drawing her to his side, whispered in her ear, "Darling Rosamond, say that you love me. Let me hear that assurance once, and I shall be almost willing to die."

"Ladies do not often confess an attachment until sure it is returned," was Rosamond's answer, and doubly forgetful now of all the dreary past, Ralph Browning poured into her ear hot, burning words of love—hugging her closer and closer to him until through the open window came the sound of Mr. Peters' voice calling to the stranger girl who had that morning entered service at Riverside as a waiting-maid in general. *Maria* was the name, and as the ominous word fell upon Mr. Browning's ear, he started, and pushing Rosamond from him, turned his face away so she could not see the expression of mute despair settling down upon it. Sinking upon the lounge he buried his face in its cushions while Rosamond looked curiously upon him, feeling sure that she knew what it was that so affected him. He had told her of his love—had said that she was dearer to him than his life, and in confessing this he had forgotten the dark shadow upon his life, and it was the dread of telling it to her—the pain of saying "I love you, but you cannot be my wife," which

affected him so strangely. But she knew it all, and she longed to assure him of her sympathy. At last when he seemed to be more calm, she stole up to him, and kneeling at his side bent over him so that her bright hair mingled with his own.

"Mr. Browning," she whispered softly, "*I know your secret*, and I do not love you less."

"*You, Rosamond, you know it!*" he exclaimed, gazing fixedly at her. "It cannot be. You would never do as you have done."

"But I do know it," she continued, taking both his hands in hers, and looking him steadily in the eye, by way of controlling him, should he be seized with a sudden attack, "I know exactly what it is, and though it will prevent me from being your wife, it will not prevent me from loving you just the same, or from living with you either. I shall stay here always—and—and—pardon me, Mr. Browning, but when you get furious, as you sometimes do, I can quiet you better than any one else, and it may be, the world will never need to know you are a *madman!*"

Mr. Browning looked searchingly into her innocent eyes, and then, in spite of himself, he laughed aloud. He understood why she should think him a madman, and though he repented of it afterward, he hastened to undeceive her now. "As I hope to see another day, it is not that," he said. "It is far worse than insanity; and, Rosamond, though it breaks my heart to say it, it is wicked for me to talk of love to you, and you must not remember what I said. You must crush every tender thought of me. You must forget me—nay, more—you must *hate* me. Will you, Rosamond?"

"No—no—no," she cried, and laying her face in his lap, she burst into a passionate flood of tears.

"Leave me," he whispered, "or I *shall* go mad, for I know I am the cause of this distress."

There was decision in the tones of his voice, and it stilled the tumult in Rosamond's bosom. Rising to her feet, she said calmly, "I will go, but I cannot forget that you deceived me. You have wrung from me a confession of my love, only to throw it back upon me as a priceless thing."

Not thus would he part with her, and grasping her arm, he began, "Heaven knows how much more than my very life I love you——"

He did not finish the sentence, for through the air a small, dark object came, and, missing its aim, dropped upon the hearth, where it was broken in a hundred pieces. It was a vase which stood upon the table in the hall, and Ben Van Vechten's was the hand that threw it! Impatient at the delay, he had come up in time to hear his uncle's last words, which aroused his Southern blood at once, and seizing the vase, he hurled it at the offender's head—then, rushing down the stairs, he burst upon his mother with "Great thunder! mother; Uncle Ralph is making love to Rosamond himself, and she likes it too. I saw it with my own eyes! I'll hang myself in the barn, or go to the Crimean war!" and Ben bounded up and down like an India-rubber ball. Suddenly remembering that another train was due ere long, he darted out of the house, followed by his distracted mother, who, divining his intention, ran swiftly after him, imploring him to return. Pausing for a moment, as he struck into the highway, he called out, "Good-by, mother. I've only one choice left—WAR! Give my love to Rosamond, and tell

her I shall die like a hero. You needn't wear black, if you don't want to. Good-by."

He turned the corner—he had started for the *war*—and mentally resolving to follow him in the next train, Mrs. Van Vechten returned to the house, and sought her brother.

"Ralph," she began sternly, "have you talked of love to Rosamond?"

Mr. Browning had borne so much that nothing startled him now, and returning her glance unflinchingly, he replied, "I have."

"How, then—is Marie dead?" the lady asked.

"Not to my knowledge—but *hist*," was the reply, as Mr. Browning nodded toward the hall, where a rustling movement was heard.

It was the *new girl*, coming with dust-pan and brush to remove the fragments of the vase, though how she knew they were there, was a question she alone could answer. For a single instant her dull, gray eye shot a gleam of intelligence at the occupants of the room, and then assuming her usual appearance, she did what she came to do, and departed. When they were again alone, Mrs. Van Vechten demanded an explanation of her brother, who gave it unhesitatingly. Cold-hearted as she always seemed, Mrs. Van Vechten had some kind feelings left, and, touched by her brother's tale of suffering, she gave him no word of reproach, and even unbent herself to say that a brighter day might come to him yet. Then she spoke of Ben, announcing her determination of following him that night. To this plan Mr. Browning offered no remonstrance, and when the night express left the Granby station, it carried with it Mrs. Van Vechten, in pursuit of the runaway Ben.

CHAPTER VIII.

NEWS.

NEARLY two weeks had passed away since the exciting scene in Mr. Browning's library, and during that time Rosamond had kept herself aloof from her guardian, meeting him only at the table, where she maintained toward him a perfectly respectful but rather freezing manner. She was deeply mortified to think he had won from her a confession of her love, and then told her how useless—nay, worse—how wicked it was for her to think of him. She knew that he suffered intensely, but she resolutely left him to suffer alone, and he would rather it should be so. Life was growing more and more a wearisome burden, and when, just one week after the library interview, he received a note in the well-remembered handwriting, he asked that he might die and forget his grief. The letter was dated at the Springs, where Miss Porter was still staying, though she said she intended starting the next day for Cuyler, a little out-of-the-way place on the lake, where there was but little company, and she could be quiet and recruit her nervous system. The latter had been terribly shocked, she said, by hearing of his recent attempt at making love to Rosamond Leyton! "Indeed," she wrote, "it is to this very love-making that you owe this letter from me, as I deem it my duty to keep continually before your mind the fact that *I* am still alive."

With a blanched cheek Mr. Browning read this letter

through—then tore it into fragments, wondering much who gave her the information. There were no *spies* about his premises. Rosamond would not do it, and it must have been his sister, though why she should thus wish to annoy him he did not know, when she, more than any one else, had been instrumental in placing him where he was. Once he thought of telling Rosamond all, but he shrank from this, for she would leave his house, he knew, and, though she might never again speak kindly to him, he would rather feel that she was there.

And so another dreary week went by, and then one morning there came to him tidings which stopped for an instant the pulsations of his heart, and sent through his frame a thrill so benumbing and intense that at first pity and horror were the only emotions of which he seemed capable. It came to him in a newspaper paragraph, which in substance was as follows:

"A sad catastrophe occurred on Thursday afternoon at Cuyler, a little place upon the lake, which of late has been somewhat frequented during the summer months. Three ladies and one gentleman went out in a small pleasure-boat which is kept for the accommodation of the guests. They had not been gone very long when a sudden thunder-gust came on, accompanied by a violent wind, and the owner of the skiff, feeling some alarm for the safety of the party, went down to the landing just in time to see the boat make a few mad plunges with the waves, and then capsize at the distance of nearly half a mile from the shore.

"Every possible effort was made to save the unfortunate pleasure-seekers, but in vain; they disappeared

from view long before a boat could reach them. One of the bodies has not yet been recovered. It is that of a Miss Porter, from Florida. She had reached Cuyler only the day previous, and was unaccompanied by a single friend, save a waiting-maid, who seems overwhelmed with grief at the loss of her mistress."

This, then, was the announcement which so affected Ralph Browning, blotting out for a moment the wretched past, and taking him back to the long ago when he first knew Marie Porter and fancied that he loved her. She was *dead* now—*dead*. Many a time he whispered that word to himself, and with each repetition the wish grew strong within him—not that she were living, but that while living he had not hated her so bitterly, and with the softened feeling which death will always bring, he blamed himself far more than he did her. There had been wrong on both sides, but he would rather now, that she had been reconciled to him ere she found that watery grave. Hand in hand with these reflections came another thought; a bewildering, intoxicating thought. He was *free* at last—free to *love*—to *worship*—to *marry* Rosamond.

"And I will go to her at once," he said, after the first hour had been given to the dead; "I will tell her all the truth."

He arose to leave the room, but something staid him there, and whispered in his ear, "There may be some mistake. Cuyler is not far away. Go there first and investigate."

For him to will was to do, and telling Mrs. Peters he should be absent from home for a time, he started immediately for Cuyler, which he reached near the close of the day. Calm and beautiful looked the waters of the lake

on that summer afternoon, and if within their caverns the ill-fated Marie slept, they kept over her an unruffled watch and told no tales of her last dying wail to the careworn, haggard man who stood upon the sandy beach, where they said that she embarked, and listened attentively while they told him how gay she seemed that day, and how jestingly she spoke of the dark thunder-head which even then was mounting the western horizon. They had tried in vain to find her, and it was probable she had sunk into one of the unfathomable holes with which the lake was said by some to abound. Sarah, the waiting-maid, wept passionately, showing that the deceased must have had some good qualities, or she could not thus have attached a servant to her.

Looking upon Mr. Browning as a friend of her late mistress, she relied on him for counsel, and when he advised her immediate return to Florida, she readily consented, and started on the same day that he turned his face toward Riverside. They had said to him, "If we find her, shall we send her to your place?" and with an involuntary shudder he had answered, "No—oh, no. You must apprise me of it by letter, as also her Florida friends—but bury her quietly here."

They promised compliance with his wishes, and feeling that a load was off his mind, he started at once for home. Certainty now was doubly sure. Marie was dead, and as this conviction became more and more fixed upon his mind, he began to experience a dread of telling Rosamond all. Why need she know of it, when the telling it would throw much censure on himself. She was not a great newspaper reader—she had not seen the paragraph, and would not see it. He could tell her that the ob-

stacle to his happiness had been removed—that 'twas no longer a sin for him to think of her or seek to make her his wife. All this he would say to her, but nothing more.

And all this he did say to her in the summer-house at the foot of the garden, where he found her just as the sun was setting. And Rosamond listened eagerly—never questioning him of the past, or caring to hear of it. She was satisfied to know that she might love him now, and with his arm around her, she sat there alone with him until the August moon was high up in the heavens. He called her his "sunshine"—his "light"—his "life," and pushing the silken curls from off her childish brow, kissed her again and again, telling her she should be his wife when the twentieth day of November came. That was his twenty-ninth birth-day, and looking into her girlish face, he asked her if he were not too old. He knew she would tell him *no*, and she did, lovingly caressing his grayish hair.

"He had grown young since he sat there," she said, and so, indeed, he had, and the rejuvenating process continued day after day, until the villagers laughingly said that his approaching marriage had put him back ten years. It was known to all the town's folks now, and unlike most other matches, was pronounced a suitable one. Even Mrs. Van Vechten, who had found Ben at Lovejoy's Hotel, and still remained with him in New York, wrote to her brother a kind of congratulatory letter, mingled with sickly sentimental regrets for the "heart-broken, deserted and now departed Marie." It was doubtful whether she came up to the wedding or not, she said, as Ben had positively refused to come, or to leave the city either, and kept her

constantly on the watch lest he should elope with a second-rate actress at Laura Keene's theatre.

Rosamond laughed heartily when Mr. Browning told her of this sudden change in Ben, and then with a sigh as she thought how many times his soft, good-natured heart would probably be wrung, she went back to the preparations for her bridal, which were on a magnificent scale. They were going to Europe—they would spend the winter in Paris, and as Mr. Browning had several influential acquaintances there, they would of course see some society, and he resolved that his bride should be inferior to none in point of dress, as she was to none in point of beauty. Every thing which love could devise or money procure was purchased for her, and the elegance of her outfit was for a long time the only theme of village gossip.

Among the members of the household none seemed more interested in the preparations than the girl Maria, who has before been incidentally mentioned. Her dull eyes lighted up with each new article of dress, and she suddenly displayed so much taste in every thing pertaining to a lady's toilet, that Rosamond was delighted and kept her constantly with her, devising this new thing and that, all of which were invariably tried on and submitted to the inspection of Mr. Browning, who was sure to approve whatever his Rosamond wore. And thus gayly sped the halcyon hours, bringing at last the fading leaf and the wailing October winds; but to Rosamond, basking in the sunlight of love, there came no warning note to tell her of the dark November days which were hurrying swiftly on.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GUEST AT RIVERSIDE.

THE November days had come. The satin dress was made—the bridal veil sent home—the wreath of orange, too; and then, one morning when the summer, it would seem, had come to revisit the scenes of its brief reign, Mr. Browning kissed his bride elect, and wiped away the two big tears which dropped from her eyelashes when he told her that he was going away for that day and the next.

"But when to-morrow's sun is setting, I shall be with you again," he said, and he bade her quiet the fluttering of her little heart, which throbbed so painfully at parting with him.

"I don't know why it is," she said, "I'm not one bit superstitious, but Bruno howled so dismally under my window all night, and when he ceased, a horrid owl set up a screech. I told Maria, and she said, in her country the cry of an owl was a sign that the grave was about to give up its dead, and she looked so mysterious that she frightened me all the more—"

"That Maria is too superstitious, and I don't like her to be with you so much," said Mr. Browning, his own cheek turning slightly pale as he thought of the grave giving up *his* dead. Thrice he turned back to kiss the little maiden, who followed him down the avenue, and then climbed into a box-like seat, which had been built on the top of the gate-post, and was sheltered by a syc-

more. "Here," said she, "shall I wait for you to-morrow night, when the sun is away over there. Oh, I wish it would hurry."

He wished so, too, and with another fond good-by they parted. The day seemed long to Rosamond, and, though she varied the time by trying on each and every one of her new dresses, she was glad when it was night, so she could go to bed and sleep the time away. The next morning the depression of spirits was gone; he was coming—she should wait for him beneath the sycamore—possibly she would hide to make him believe she was not there, and the bright blushes stole over her dimpled cheeks as she thought what he would do when he found that she *was* there.

"Ten o'clock," she said to herself, as she heard the whistle of the upward train. "Seven hours more and he will come."

Going to her room, she took a book, in which she tried to be interested, succeeding so well that, though her windows commanded a view of the avenue, she did not see the lady who came slowly up the walk, casting about her eager, curious glances, and pausing more than once to note the exceeding beauty of the place. Once she stopped for a long time, and, leaning against a tree, seemed to be debating whether to turn back or go on. Deciding upon the latter, she arose, and quickening her movements, soon stood upon the threshold. Her ring was answered by Maria, who betrayed no surprise, for from the upper hall Mrs. Peters herself was closely inspecting the visitor.

"Is Mr. Browning at home?" the lady asked.

"Gone to Buffalo," was the laconic reply, and a gleam of satisfaction flitted over the face of the questioner, who

continued: "And the young lady, Miss Leyton? Has she gone, too?"

"She is here," said Maria, still keeping her eye upon the shadow bending over the balustrade. "What name shall I give her?"

"No name. I wish to surprise her," and passing on into the parlor, the stranger laid aside her hat and shawl with the air of one perfectly at home; then seating herself upon a sofa, she examined the room as curiously as she had examined the grounds of Riverside.

"It seems a pity to mar all this," she said, "and were it not that I hate him so much, I would go away forever, though that would be a greater injury to her than my coming to life will be. Of course he's told her all, and spite of her professed liking for me, she is glad that I am dead. I long, yet dread, to see her amazement; but hist—she comes."

There was the sound of little, high-heeled slippers on the stairs, the flutter of a pink morning gown, and then Rosamond Leyton stood face to face with—Marie Porter! The grave had given up its dead, and without any visible marks of the world prepared for such as she, save, indeed, the increased *fire* which burned in her black eyes, the risen woman sat there much as living people sit—her head bent forward—her lips apart—and a look of expectation upon her face. But she was doomed to disappointment. Rosamond knew nothing of the past, and with a cry of pleasurable surprise she started forward, exclaiming, "Oh, Miss Porter, I felt so cross when told a visitor was here, but now I know who 'tis, I am so glad, for I am very lonely to-day."

The hard woman swept her hand a moment before her

eyes, and with that movement swept away the kindly spirit, which whispered, "Don't undeceive her. Don't quench the light of that bright face, nor break that girl's heart."

But it was necessary; Marie Porter knew that, and though she repented of what she had done, it was now too late to retreat, and all she could do was to break the heart of the unsuspecting girl as tenderly as possible.

"Why are you so lonely?" she said, "This is a most beautiful spot. I believe I'd like to live here myself."

"Oh, yes, 'tis a lovely place," answered Rosamond, "but—but—Mr. Browning is not here," and she averted her crimson face.

"Is Mr. Browning so necessary to your happiness?" Miss Porter asked, and bringing an ottoman, Rosamond sat down at her visitor's feet and thus replied: "We talked so much of him at the Springs that it surely is not foolish in me to tell you what every body knows. Now, you won't laugh at me, will you? Mr. Browning and I are going to—oh, I can't tell it; but, any way, your fortune-telling is not true."

"Mr. Browning and you are going to be married. Is that it?" the woman asked; and with a quick, upward glance of her soft, brown eyes, Rosamond replied, "Yes, that's it—that's it; and oh, you can't begin to guess how happy I am. He is not *crazy* either. It was something else, though I don't know what, for he never told me, and I do not care to know. The obstacle has been removed, whatever it was, and it has wrought such a change in him. He's so much younger—handsomer, now, and so kind to me. I'm glad you've come, Miss Porter, and you'll stay till after the wedding. It's the twentieth, and

he has bought me so many new things. We are going to Europe. Just think of a winter in Paris, with Mr. Browning! But, what! Are you *crying*?" and Rosamond started as a burning tear fell upon her forehead.

"Rosamond Leyton," said Miss Porter, in a voice husky with emotion, "I have not wept in eight long years, but the sight of you, so innocent, so happy, wrings the tears from my stony heart, as agony will sometimes force out the drops of perspiration when the body is shivering with cold. I was young like you once, and my bridal was fixed—" She paused, and stealing an arm around her waist, Rosamond said pleadingly, "Tell me about it, Miss Porter, I always knew you had a history. Did the man die?"

"No—no. Better for me if he had—aye, and better, too, for you."

This last was a whisper, and Rosamond did not hear it. Her thoughts were bent upon the *story*, and she continued, "Will it pain you too much to tell it now?"

"Yes, yes, wait," Miss Porter said, "Wait until after dinner, and meantime, as I cannot possibly stay until the 20th, perhaps you will let me see your dresses."

Nothing could please Rosamond more, and gay as a little child, she led the way to a large upper room, which contained her wedding outfit. Proudly she displayed her treasures, flitting like a bird from one pile of finery to another, and reserving the most important until the very last.

"There's the dinner-bell," she suddenly exclaimed, "I did not think it could be *one*. Only four hours more—but come, let us go down and after dinner, if you'll never tell Mrs. Peters, nor any body, I'll try on my bridal dress and let you see if it is becoming. I want so much to

know how it looks, since Maria put the rose-buds in the berthe. And then your story. I must hear that."

As they were going down the stairs Miss Porter took Rosamond's hand and said, "How is this?—Where is my ring?"

Rosamond could not tell her of an act which now that it no longer had insanity for an excuse, puzzled her not a little. So she made some trivial excuse, which, however, did not deceive her auditor. But the latter deemed it wise to say no more just then, and silently followed her young friend into the dining-room. Dinner being over they went up to Rosamond's chamber, the closet of which contained the bridal robes.

"*Two o' clock*," said Rosamond, consulting her watch, then bringing out the rich white satin and exquisite overskirt of lace, she continued, "I shall have just time to try this on, hear your story and get dressed before Mr. Browning comes. How short the day seems, with you here! I told him I'd be sitting in that little box which you possibly noticed, built on the gate-post against the tree.—And he'll be so disappointed not to find me there, that maybe you won't mind my leaving you awhile when the sun is right over the woods."

"Certainly not," answered Miss Porter, and the dressing-up process began, Rosamond chatting gayly all the while and asking if it were very foolish for her to try on the dress. "I should not do it," she said, "if you would stay. Can't you?"

The answer was a decided negative, and adjusting her little slipper, Rosamond stood up while her companion put over her head the satin dress. It fitted admirably, and nothing could have been fairer than the round, chubby

arms and plump, well-shaped shoulders which the *short-comings* of the dress showed to good advantage. Now the lace over-skirt—now the berthe—and then the veil, with the orange-wreath twined among the flowing curls, and Rosamond was dressed at last.

"How do I look?" she asked, but Marie Porter made no immediate reply, and as she gazed upon the young girl, so beautiful, so innocent and unsuspecting, who can tell of the keen anguish at her heart, or how she shrank from the bitter task which she must do, and quickly, too, for the clock pointed to *three*, and her plan was now to strike the *dove* and then flee ere the *eagle* came. She would thus wound him more deeply, for the very uncertainty would add fresh poison to his cup of agony.

"How do I look?" Rosamond asked again, and after duly complimenting the dress, Miss Porter added, "I promised you my story, and if I tell it at all to-day, I must begin it now, for it is long, and I would finish it ere Mr. Browning comes."

"Very well, I'm all attention," said Rosamond, and like a lamb before its slaughterer she knelt before the woman, bending low her graceful head to have the wreath removed.

This done, Miss Porter said, "Have you any camphor handy, or hartshorn? I am sometimes faint and may want them."

"Yes, both, here, in the bathing-room," said Rosamond, and she brought them to the lady, who placed them upon the table—not for herself, but for one who would need them more—for poor, poor Rosamond. The disrobing proceeded slowly, for the little girl was well pleased with the figure reflected by the mirror. But Miss Porter could

not wait, and when the wreath, the veil, and berthe were removed, she seated herself by the window in a position which commanded a full view of her victim's face; and forcing down the throbbings of her heart, which it seemed to her were audible in that silent room, she commenced the story.

CHAPTER X.

THE STORY.

"MY home," began Miss Porter, "is, as you know, in Florida. I am an only child, as were both my parents, so that I have now living no nearer relative than a great-uncle—a superannuated clergyman, who superintends my affairs, and who, in case I die before he does, which is very probable, will be heir to my possessions.

"It is now nearly ten years since my father started for Europe, and I went to an adjoining state to visit a widow lady, whom I had met in New Orleans the winter previous. It is not necessary that I should use real names, consequently I will call her Mrs. Le Vert. She was spending the summer on her plantation, at what she called her country-seat. It was a large, old-fashioned, wooden building, many miles from any neighbors, and here she lived alone—for her only son, a lad twelve years of age, was at some northern school. At first I was very lonely, for the secluded life we led at Holly Grove was hardly in accordance with the taste of a young girl. Still, I did not mind it as much as some, for I cared but little for gentlemen's society, and had frequently declared that I should never marry.

"Toward the last of July, Mrs. Le Vert's brother came to visit her. He was a handsome, boyish-looking youth, six months older than myself—just out of college—full

of life and very fond of pretty girls, particularly if they chanced to be wealthy."

"That's a little like Ben," said Rosamond, and Miss Porter continued:

"From the first, Mrs. Le Vert seemed determined to make a match between us, for her brother was poor, and she fancied it would be a fine idea to have the Porter estate come into the Dunlap family. So she threw us constantly together—talked of me to him and of him to me, until I really began to believe I liked him. He, on the contrary, cared for nothing but my money. Still he deemed it advisable to assume a show of affection, and one night talked to me of love quite eloquently. I had been to a dinner party that day, and had worn all my diamonds. He had never seen them before, and they must have inflamed his avarice, for I afterward heard him tell his sister that he never should have proposed if I had not looked so beautiful that night. '*I was irresistible in my diamonds,*' he said."

Miss Porter paused a moment to witness the effect of her last words, but Rosamond was looking over her shoulder at a *wrinkle* she had just discovered in the waist, and did not heed them. Still she was listening, and she said, "Yes—go on. You were looking beautifully that night. Did you consent to marry him?"

"Unhappily, I did," returned Miss Porter, "for I had made myself believe that I loved him. I wished that he was older, to be sure, but he said we would wait until he was of age. This plan, however, did not suit his ambitious sister. She knew I intended asking my father's approval, and from what she heard of him she feared he would never consent to my marrying a poor student, and

she urged an immediate union. But I persisted in writing to my father, who answered immediately, forbidding me to think of young Dunlap, ordering me to go home, and saying he always intended me for John Castlewell, a neighbor of ours—a millionaire—a *booby*—a *fool*—whom I hated as I did poison.

"Not long after the receipt of this letter I was surprised by the sudden appearance of Uncle Bertram, who had come at my father's request to take me home. This roused me at once. My father was a tyrant, I said, and I would let him know I could do as I pleased. In my excitement, I fancied I could not exist a moment without Richard Dunlap, while he declared that life would be a blank for him if passed away from me. At this opportune moment Mrs. Le Vert suggested that we be married immediately—that very night. Uncle Bertram fortunately was a clergyman, and could officiate as well as any other. In justice to Richard, I will say that he hesitated longer than I did—but he was persuaded at last, as was Uncle Bertram, and with no other witness than Mrs. Le Vert and a white woman who lived with her as half waiting-maid and half companion, we were married."

Rosamond was interested now, and forgetting to remove her dress, she threw a crimson shawl around her shoulders, and sitting down upon the bed, exclaimed, "Married! You married! Why, then, are you called Porter?"

"Listen and you shall know," returned the lady, a dark look settling down upon her face.

"Scarcely was the ceremony over, when I began to regret it—not because I disliked Richard, but because I dreaded my father's displeasure, for he had a most savage, revengeful temper, and his daughter possesses the same."

This was bitterly spoken, and she continued—"Hardly an hour after we were married, a negro brought a letter to Richard from an eccentric old man for whom he had been named. In it the old man said he had made his namesake his heir, provided he did not marry until he was *twenty-five*.

"'I know just how *frillickin'* you are,' he wrote, 'and I know, too, how unsuitable and how unhappy most early marriages are—so my boy, if you want Sunnyside, wait till you are twenty-five before you take an extra rib. I hate to be bothered with letters, and if you don't answer this, I shall conclude that you accept my terms.'"

"Mrs. Le Vert at once suggested that, as the old gentleman had already had two fits of apoplexy, and would undoubtedly soon have the third, our marriage should for a time be kept a secret."

"But he didn't consent," cried Rosamond.

"Yes, he did," answered Miss Porter, "and though I, too, said it would be best, I began to distrust him from that moment—to think that he preferred money to myself. Uncle Bertram promised secrecy and went back alone, and then commenced a life of wretchedness, which makes me shudder even to recall it. With the exception of my own servant, who dared not tell if I bade her be silent, the blacks knew nothing of our marriage, and though we lived together as man and wife, so skillfully did Mrs. Le Vert and Esther, her white domestic, manage the matter, that for a time our secret was safely kept. A few of the negroes discovered it ere I left; but as they always lived in that out-of-the-way place, it never followed me, and to this day no human being in Florida, save Uncle Bertram, knows of the marriage.

"I am very impulsive, and the excitement being over, my affection began to cool. Richard could have kept it alive had he tried, but he did not. On the contrary he was much alone, and when with me was always tormenting me with conscientious scruples about deceiving 'the old man.'"

"Oh, I like him for that," cried Rosamond, "I like him for that. Why didn't you let him tell?"

"Because," returned Miss Porter, "I had fears that father would disinherit *me*, and if Richard lost Sunnyside, we should be poor indeed."

A shadow passed over Rosamond's face, and she said involuntarily, "I could be happy with Mr. Browning if we *were* poor."

Marie started and answered quickly, "What has *Mr. Browning* to do with my story?"

"Nothing, nothing," returned Rosamond, "only I was thinking that if you loved Richard as well as I do Mr. Browning, you would not have cared for money."

"But I didn't," returned Marie. "I was mistaken. 'Twas a mere childish fancy. I never loved him. *I hate him now.*"

She spoke vehemently, and when Rosamond said mournfully. "Hate your husband!" she replied, "Yes, more than *hate*, or I had never come to tell you this; but listen—from indifference we came to coldness—from coldness to recrimination—from that to harsh words—from harsh words to quarrels—and from quarrels to *blows*!"

She uttered the last word slowly, while Rosamond exclaimed, "Not *blows*, Miss Porter! No man would strike a woman. *I almost hate him, now.*"

The proud lip curled scornfully—a gleam of satisfaction

shot from the keen black eyes, and Marie went on. "He would say—nay does say *I* was the most to blame—that I aggravated him beyond human endurance—but he provoked me to it. Think of his *swearing* at me, Rosamond—calling me a *she-devil* and all that. Think, too, of his telling me to my face that he was driven into the marriage wholly by his sister—that he regretted it more than I, and to crown all, think of his *boxing my ears*!—he, a poor, insignificant Northern *puppy*, boxing *me*—a Porter, and a Southern heiress!"

She was terribly excited, and Rosamond, gazing at her face, distorted with malignant passion, began to fancy that the greater wrong might perhaps have lain with her.

After a moment's pause, Marie began again. "When we had been three months man and wife, he wrote to the old man, confessing his marriage, and saying sundry things not wholly complimentary to his bride; but I intercepted it, read it, tore it up, and taunted him with it. I believe I called him a low-lived Yankee, or something like that, and then it was he struck me. The blow sunk deep into my soul. It was an insult, an unpardonable insult, and could not be forgiven. My Southern blood was all on fire, and had I been a man, he should have paid for that blow. I feel it yet; the smart has never for a moment left me, but burns upon my face just as hatred for him burns upon my heart!"

"Oh, Miss Porter," cried Rosamond, as the former ground her teeth together, "don't look so terribly. You frighten me. He struck you, but he asked your pardon, sure?"

"Yes, he pretended to, but I spat at him and bade him leave me forever. His sister tried to interfere, but she

made the matter worse, and as my father was on the eve of embarking for America, I determined to go home, and when he came, tell him the whole and ask him to seek satisfaction from one who had dared to strike his daughter. Richard made a show of trying to keep me—said we had better live together, and all that, while his sister called us two silly children who needed whipping. But I did not heed it. I went home to Uncle Bertram and waited for my father, who never came. He died upon the sea, and I was heir of all his vast possessions. Then Richard made overtures for reconciliation, but I spurned them all. You've heard of *woman-haters*, Rosamond—I am a *man-hater*. I loathe the whole sex, Uncle Bertram excepted. My marriage was of course a secret in Florida. My servant, who knew of it, died soon after my father, and as Uncle Bertram kept his own counsel, more than one sought my hand, but I turned my back upon them all.

"Four or five years ago he wrote me a letter. He was then master of Sunnyside, for the old man left it to him after all. He was lonely there, he said, and he asked a reconciliation. Had he never struck me, I might have gone, for his letter was kindly enough, but the blow was a barrier between us, so I refused to listen, and exulted over the thought of his living there alone all his days, with the secret on his mind.

"The sweetest morsel of all in the cup of revenge was, however, for a time withheld, but it came at last, Rosamond. It came at last. He loved a beautiful young girl, loved her all the more that he could not marry her."

She drew nearer to Rosamond, who, though still unsus-

pecting, trembled from head to foot with an undefinable emotion of coming evil.

"I saw her, Rosamond; saw this young girl with his name upon her lips when waking—saw her, too, with his name upon her lips when sleeping, and all this while she did not dream that *I*, the so-called Marie Porter, was his wife, the barrier which kept him from saying the words her little heart longed so to hear."

There were livid spots on Rosamond's neck—livid spots upon her face, and still she did not move from her seat, though her clammy hand clutched nervously her bridal dress. A *horrid* suspicion had flashed upon her, but with a mighty effort she threw it off as injustice to Mr. Brown-ing, and mentally crying, "It cannot be," she faintly whispered, "Go on."

"The summer I met her," said Miss Porter, I was at Cartersville, a little out-of-the-way place on a lake—"

"You're telling me true?" interrupted Rosamond, joy thrilling in her tones.

"Yes, true," returned Miss Porter.

"Then bless you—bless you for those last words," rejoined Rosamond, burying her face in her companion's lap. "A terrible fear for a moment came over me, that it might be *I*. But it isn't. *I* met you at the Springs. Oh, if it had been me, I should most surely die."

"But *she* did not—the young girl," resumed Miss Porter. "She had a brave, strong heart, and she bore up wondrously. She felt that he had cruelly deceived her, and that helped her to bear the blow. Besides, she was glad she knew of it in time, for, had he married her, she would not have been his wife, you know."

Rosamond shuddered and replied, "I know, but my

heart would have broken all the same. It aches so won for her. But go on, how did she find it out? Who could have strength to tell her?"

There was a pause, and each could hear the beating of the other's heart. The November wind had risen within the last half hour, and now howled dismally past the window, seeming to Rosamond like the wail that young girl must have uttered when she first learned how her trust had been betrayed. *The clock struck four!* Rosamond counted each stroke, and thought, "One hour more, and *he* will be here." Marie counted each stroke, and thought, "One hour more, and I must be gone."

"Rosamond," she began again, "what I now have to confess is an act of which I have repented bitterly, and never more than since I sat within this room. But it was not premeditated, and believe me, Rosamond, it was not done for any malice I bore to that young girl, for I pitied her so much—oh, so much," and her hand wandered caressingly over the bright hair lying on her lap.

"We went out one afternoon—two ladies, a gentleman, and myself—in a small sail-boat upon the lake. I planned the excursion and thought I should enjoy it, but we had not been out long when my old affection of the heart began to trouble me. I grew faint, and begged of them to put me on the land. They complied with my request, and set me down upon a point higher up than that from which we had embarked, and near to a dilapidated cabin where lived a weird old hag, who earned a scanty livelihood by fortune-telling. I told her I was sick, and sat down by her door where I could watch the movements of the party. Suddenly a terrific thunder-storm arose, the wind blew a hurricane, and though the

boat rode the billows bravely for a time, it capsized at length, and its precious freight disappeared beneath the foaming waves. For a moment horror chilled my blood; then, swift as the lightning which leaped from the cloud overhanging the graves of my late companions, a maddening thought flashed upon my mind."

"But the girl—hasten to that part," said Rosamond, lifting up her head, while Miss Porter went back to her chair.

"I shall come to her soon enough," returned Miss Porter, continuing her story. "No living being, save the old woman at my side, knew of my escape, and I could bribe her easily. Fortunately I carried the most of my money about my person, and I said to her, 'There are reasons why, for a time at least, I wish to be considered dead. Here are twenty dollars now, and the same shall be paid you every month that you are silent. No human creature must know that I am living.' I saw by the kindling of her eye at the sight of the gold that I was safe, and when the night shadows were falling I stole from her cabin, and taking a circuitous route to avoid observation, I reached the midway station in time for the evening train.

"Three days later in a distant city I read of the sad catastrophe—read that all had been found but one, a Miss Porter, from Florida, and as I read I thought '*he* will see that, too.' He did see it. Before going to Carterville I sent to Sunnyside a girl who was under peculiar obligations to me, and one whom I could trust. She secured the place. She was employed at last about the person of that young girl, *who had lived at Sunnyside since she was a child, a friendless orphan.*"

There was a quick, gasping moan as if the soul were

parting from the body, and Rosamond fell upon her face, which the pillows concealed from view, while Miss Porter hurriedly proceeded:

"There is but little more to tell. I wrote to the girl who took her own letters from the office. I told her all, and from her heard that the bridal day was fixed. The obstacle was removed—not *insanity*, but a *living wife*. Need I say more?"

She paused, but from the bed where the crushed, motionless figure lay, there came no sound, and she said again, "Speak, Rosamond. Curse me, if you will, for saving you from an unlawful marriage."

Still there was no sound, save the low sighing of the wind, which seemed to have taken a fresh note of sadness as if bewailing the unutterable desolation of the young girl, who lay so still and lifeless that Marie Porter's heart quickened with fear, and drawing near, she touched the little hand resting on the pillow. It was cold—rigid—as was also the face which she turned to the light.

"*It is death!*" she cried, and a wild shriek rang through the house, bringing at once the servants, headed by Mrs. Peters.

"*What is it?*" cried the latter, as she saw the helpless figure and beautiful upturned face.

"*It's death, madam—death*, and it's coming on me, too," answered Miss Porter, clasping her hands over her heart, which throbbed as it never had done before, and which at last prostrated her upon the lounge.

But no one heeded her, save the girl Maria. The rest gave their attention to Rosamond, who lay so long in the death-like stupor that others than Miss Porter believed her dead.

The clock struck five! and echoing from the Granby hills the engine-whistle came. Then a slight tremor ran through her frame, and Mrs. Peters whispered joyfully, "There's life—there's hope."

Along the highway the returning traveler came with rapid tread, but 'neath the sycamore no Rosamond was waiting.

"She is hiding from me," he said, but his search for her was vain, and he rapidly hastened on.

All about the house was still. There was no Rosamond at the door—nor in the hall—nor in the parlor—nor on the stairs; but from her chamber came the buzz of voices, and he entered unannounced, recoiling backward when he saw the face upon the pillow, and knew that it was Rosamond's. Every particle of color had left it; there were dark circles beneath the eyes, and a look about the mouth as if the concentrated agony of years had fallen suddenly upon her.

"What is it?" he asked, and at the sound of his voice, the brown eyes he had been wont to call so beautiful unclosed, but there sunny brightness was all gone, and he shuddered at their dim, meaningless expression.

She seemed to know him, and stretching her arm toward him as a child does toward its mother when danger threatens, she laid her head upon his bosom with a piteous wail—the only really audible sound she had yet uttered.

"Rosamond, darling—what has come upon you?" he said, "and why are you in your bridal dress?"

At that word she started, and moving away from him, moaned sadly, "It was cruel—oh, so cruel to deceive me, when I loved and trusted him so much."

"Won't some body tell me what this means?" he demanded, and Mrs. Peters replied, "We do not know. There's been a strange woman here, and she was with Rosamond when it happened."

"Woman? What woman? And where is she now?" he asked, and Mrs. Peters replied, "She was faint—dying, she said, and Maria took her into another chamber."

Mechanically he started for that chamber—hearing nothing—seeing nothing—thinking nothing for the nameless terror which had fallen upon him. He did not suspect the real truth. He merely had a vague presentiment that some one who knew nothing of the drowning had come there to save his Rosamond from what they supposed to be an unlawful marriage, and when at last he stood face to face with his living wife, when he knew the grave had given up its dead, he dropped to the floor as drops the giant oak when felled by the lightning's power!

Marie Porter, even had she been cruelly wronged, was avenged—fully, amply avenged, and covering her face with her hands, she moaned, "I have killed them both, and there's nothing left for me now but to die!"

CHAPTER XL

THE END.

OVER the horrid awakening which came to the wretched man, we need not linger; neither is it necessary to dwell upon the first few days of mystery and dread, when death seemed brooding over Riverside, and rumor was busy with surmises and suspicions concerning the stranger, and the relation, if any, which she bore to Rosamond Leyton. We will rather hasten on to the morning when to Mr. Browning the joyful tidings came that Rosamond was better—so much better, indeed, that he could see and talk with her if he chose.

Only once since the fearful night when he found her moaning in her bridal dress, had he stood by her bedside—for, though he longed to be there, he could not endure to see her turn away from him, whispering as she did so, "It was cruel—oh, so cruel to deceive me so." Neither had he been near Marie Porter, consequently he knew nothing of the means by which she had imposed upon him the story of her death. But Rosamond knew—Rosamond could tell him, and from no other lips would he hear it. So, when he learned that she was better, he asked to see her alone, and Mrs. Peters, to whom he had necessarily confided the story of his marriage, carried his message to Rosamond.

For a moment Rosamond did not seem to hear, but when the message was repeated, the great tears forced

themselves from beneath her long eyelashes, and rolling down her cheeks, dropped upon the pillow.

"He might have spared me this," she said, "but if it is his wish, I can see him."

With a mighty effort she stilled the violent throbbings of her heart, forced an unnatural calm upon her face and whispered—"Let him come now; I am ready."

He was standing without the door, so near that he heard the words, and in a moment he was at her side. Falling upon his knees before her, he clasped her hands in his, imploring her forgiveness for the great wrong he had done her in not telling her the truth at first. "But I am innocent of the last," he said; "believe me, Rosamond, I thought her dead, or I had never asked you to be my wife. I know not how she deceived me so terribly, but you know, and I have sought this interview to hear the story from your own lips. Will you tell it to me, darling—Miss Leyton, I mean," he added hastily, as he saw a shadow of pain flit over her face.

"I will if I can," she faintly answered, and summoning all her strength, she repeated to him what Miss Porter had told her, except, indeed, the parts with which she knew he was familiar.

"The plot was worthy of her who planned it," he said bitterly; then, as Rosamond made no reply, he continued—"she told you, I suppose, of our married life, and painted me the blackest villain that ever trod the earth. This may in part be true, but, Rosamond, though I may never know the bliss of calling you my wife, I cannot be thus degraded in your sight and offer no apology. I was a boy—a self-willed, high-tempered boy, nineteen years of age, and she aggravated me beyond all human

endurance, seeking ways and means by which she could provoke me. I loved her at first—nay, do not turn away incredulously. Heaven is my witness that I loved her, or thought I did, but 'twas a boyish love, and not such as I feel for you."

"You swore at her," said Rosamond, unable to reconcile love with an oath.

"Once—only once," he replied. "I blush to own it, for it was not a manly act."

"You struck her," and for the first time since he had been in that room the brown eyes rested full upon his face.

"Yes, Rosamond," he answered; "I own that, too, but she goaded me to madness, and even raised her voice against my sainted mother, who had borne so dastardly a son as I!"

"And Riverside?" said Rosamond. "Did your uncle die deceived?"

"Never—never," Mr. Browning exclaimed, starting to his feet. "I told the whole truth, or I would not have lived here a day. Rosamond, I have greatly sinned, but she has not been blameless. She insulted me in every possible way, even to giving *you* her *wedding ring*, and then, lest I should not see it, wrote to me 'to look upon your finger. No wonder you thought me mad!'"

"Her *wedding ring*! Could she do that?" said Rosamond.

"Yes, her wedding ring. It first belonged to Susan, who gave it to me for the occasion, and two weeks after I had it marked with Marie's name and the date of our marriage. It is broken now, and I would to Heaven I could thus easily break the tie which binds me to

her, and keeps me from you! Oh, Rosamond, Rosamond, must it be? Must I live my life without you, when I need you so much—when my heart longs so to claim you for its own?"

He covered his face with his hands, and Rosamond could see the tears dropping slowly through his fingers. Terribly was he expatiating the sin of his boyhood, and what wonder is it, if, in his agony, he cried, "My punishment is greater than I can bear!"

Rosamond alone was calm. She seemed to have wept her tears away, and the blow which had fallen so crushingly upon her, had benumbed her heart, so that she now did not feel as acutely as the weeping man before her. Very soothingly she spoke to him, but she offered no word of cheer—no hope that all would yet be well. "They would bear it with brave hearts," she said, "and he must be reconciled to his wife."

"Never—never," he exclaimed. "The same roof cannot shelter us both, and if she chooses to stay when she is better, she is welcome to Riverside, but I cannot share it with her."

Neither said to the other, "It may be she will die," for such a thought had never intruded itself upon their minds, and yet Marie Porter's life was numbered now by days. The heart disease, from which she had long been suffering, was greatly aggravated by the strong nervous excitement through which she had recently been passing. Stimulants of a most powerful kind had created a kind of artificial strength, which had enabled her to come to Riverside, but this was fast subsiding; and when she bent over the motionless form of Rosamond, and feared that she was dead, she felt, indeed, that death would ere long claim

her as his own. The sight of her husband, too, had well nigh been more than she could bear. For nearly nine long years she had not looked upon his face, but she remembered it well—a handsome, boyish face. His hair she remembered, too—his soft, dark, wavy hair, through which her fingers had sometimes strayed, in the far back days at Holly Wood, before she was his bride. He would not be greatly changed, she thought; and when, on that fatal night, she heard his coming footsteps, she pictured him in her mind much as he was that winter-day, when, standing in his sister's door, he bade her a long good-bye. Nearer and nearer he had come—faster and louder had beaten her heart, while a cold, faint sickness crept over her.

"Open the window—I cannot breathe," she gasped; but ere her request was obeyed, Ralph Browning had fainted on the threshold, and she had asked that she might die.

She had seen him only for an instant, but that sufficed to tell her he was changed from the dark-haired, handsome boy, into the gray-haired suffering man. His eyes had met hers, but the fierce hatred she expected, was not there; and the look of utter hopeless despair which she saw in its place, touched her as reproach and resentment could not have done.

"Oh, I hope I shall die," she said, as she hid her face in the pillow. "I hope I shall die."

This wish she uttered every hour; and when, at last, the physician said to her, "Madam, you *will* die," she answered, "It is well!"

She did not ask for Mr. Browning, for she knew he would not come, but she inquired anxiously each day for

Rosamond; and when, at last, she heard they were together, she laid her hand upon her heart, and watching its rise and fall, smiled to think how fast her life was going out.

"Listen, Maria," she said, "Listen to what they say, and hear if they talk of me."

Noiselessly Maria glided to the door of Rosamond's chamber—stood there for a moment and then as noiselessly came back repeating to her mistress the substance of what she had heard, together with sundry little embellishments of her own.

"He will give you Riverside and go away himself," she said, and Miss Porter quickly rejoined, "Go where? Go with whom?"

"With Miss Leyton of course," returned Maria. "He said he would not live without her."

"The wretch!" ejaculated the angry woman, all her softer emotions giving way to this fancied insult. "He might at least wait now until I'm dead. I'll go to him myself, and see if in my presence he dare talk thus to her."

She was greatly excited, and spite of the painful throbbings of her heart and the dizzy sensation she felt stealing over her, she stepped upon the floor, and hurriedly crossed the room. The effort was too much for her feeble strength, and she sank fainting upon a chair. The girl Maria had seen her faint before, but never before had she seen so fearful a look upon her face, and she ran in terror to Mr. Browning, beseeching him to come "for her mistress was dying sure, and would trouble no body much more."

For a moment he hesitated, but when Rosamond said

"Go," he went. Taking the fainting woman in his arms he laid her upon the bed as gently, though not as tenderly, as he would have lain his Rosamond there.

"Call Mrs. Peters," he said, and when that matron came, he bade her give to the invalid every possible care.

Slowly Miss Porter came back to life, but it was only to faint again, and with each fainting fit it became more and more apparent that life was ebbing fast. They did not say to Rosamond that she would die, but they told it to Mr. Browning, who heard as one who hears not. Every other sensation seemed to have given place to a feeling of horror, and when at the close of the second day word came to him that she *was dying*, and had asked to see him, he arose mechanically and walked to her sick room as calmly as he had visited it the previous night, when he knew she was asleep. One glance, however, at her white face and wild bright eyes roused him to the reality, and bending over her pillow, he forced himself to take her hand in his, saying kindly, "Marie, do you know me?"

"Know you?" "Yes," she answered. "You are my husband—my husband." She lingered upon that name as if its sound recalled to life some olden feeling—some memory of Holly Wood, where they first had met.

"Marie, you are dying," he continued. "Shall we part in anger, or in peace?"

"In peace, if you will," she answered. "I have had my revenge—but it is *not* sweet as some say it is. I would rather, Ralph, that I had never known you, for then I should not have been the wicked wretch I am."

Mr. Browning did not reply to this, and for a few moments there was silence, during which she seemed to

sleep. Rousing up ere long, she gasped for breath, and grasping nervously her husband's hand, she whispered, "I am going now—there's no sham this time—five minutes more, and you are free to marry Rosamond. Be kind to her, Ralph. Deal with her not as you dealt with me, and—and—come closer to me, Ralph. Let me whisper this last so as no one can hear."

He bent him down to listen, and summoning all her strength, she said, not in a whisper, but in tones which echoed through the silent room—"NEVER, NEVER STRIKE ROSAMOND, WILL YOU?"

* * * * *

Rapidly the story circulated that the strange woman who lay dead at Riverside had been Ralph Browning's wife, and hundreds flocked to the funeral, hoping to gain a view of the deceased. But in this they were disappointed, for there was nothing visible, save the handsome coffin, on whose silver plate was inscribed the word "MARIE."

Some said that "Browning" might have been added to the name, and while others marvelled that the husband wore no badge of mourning, a few said wisely that the *mourning* was visible in other than the usual signs—in the hair gray before its time, and in the deep-cut lines which a *living* sorrow alone had made. And so, amid surmises of the past and foretellings of the future, the ill-fated Marie was laid in the village vault, until word could be received from her old uncle, who might wish to have her rest among the balmy groves and fragrant flowers of her beautiful Florida home.

And now our story winds to its close. Ralph Browning was free indeed, but death had been at Riverside, and

the shadow it had left must disappear ere he took to himself a second bride. Rosamond, too, must recover from the blow which had fallen so crushingly on her—must learn to confide again in the man she loved—to think of the great wrong he had done her as the result of an early, boyish error, which he regretted even more bitterly than herself.

And so the warm spring rains had fallen and the April blossoms were bursting from the dark, moist earth ere the wedding morning came. At the bridal there was no satin dress—no orange wreath—no flowing veil—but there was perfect love shining in the beautiful brown eyes of the girlish bride, while the fine face of the bridegroom wore a look of perfect happiness, as if the past were all forgotten, and the world was bright and new. Europe was still their destination, and among those who accompanied them to New York, going with them even to the vessel's deck, none bade them a more affectionate adieu than Mrs. Van Vechten herself. She had spent a part of the winter at Riverside, and had learned to appreciate the gentle girl who she knew was to be her brother's wife.

Ben, too, was of the party. He had listened in amazement to the story of his uncle's first marriage, wondering how it could have been kept from him, and remembering several little incidents, the meaning of which he now understood. He had given up the Crimean war, as well as the dancing girl, and now he had given up Rosamond, too, but he bore it quite heroically, and ever after took especial pains to speak of her as "*My Aunt Rosamond*." For more than a year the bridal pair remained abroad, and then returned again to Riverside, where now the patter of tiny feet, and the voice of childhood is heard, for

children have gathered around the hearthstone, and in all the world there is not a prouder, happier wife and mother than the little Rosamond who once on a dreary November day listened, with a breaking heart, to the story of Ralph Browning's Youthful Error.

DIAMONDS.

BAD SPELLING.

MAGGIE LEE.

THE ANSWERED PRAYER.

DIAMONDS.

"THE boys mustn't look at the girls, and the girls must look on their books," was said at least a dozen times by the village school-master, on that stormy morning when Cora Blanchard and I—she in her brother's boots, and I in my father's socks—waded through drift after drift of snow to the old brown school-house at the foot of the long, steep hill.

We were the only girls who had dared to brave that wintry storm, and we felt amply repaid for our trouble, when we saw how much attention we received from the ten tall boys who had come—some for fun—some because they saw Cora Blanchard go by—and one, Walter Beaumont, because he did not wish to lose the lesson of the day. Our teacher, Mr. Grannis, was fitting him for college, and every moment was precious to the white-browed, intellectual student, who was quite a lion among us girls, partly because he was older, and partly because he never noticed us as much as did the other boys. On this occasion, however, he was quite attentive to Cora, at least, pulling off her boots, removing her hood, and brushing the large snow-flakes from her soft wavy hair, while her dark brown eyes smiled gratefully upon him, as he gave her his warm seat by the stove.

That morning Cora wrote to me slyly on her slate:—"I

don't care if mother *does* say Walter Beaumont is *poor* as *poverty*—I like him best of any body in the world—don't you?"

I thought of the big red apple in my pocket, and of the boy who had so carefully shaken the snow from off my father's socks, and answered, "No"—thinking, the while, that I should say *yes*, if Walter had ever treated me as he did my playmate and friend Cora Blanchard. She was a beautiful young girl, a favorite with all, and possessing, as it seemed, but one glaring fault—a proneness to estimate people for their wealth rather than their worth. This in a measure was the result of her home-training, for her family, though far from being rich, were very aristocratic, and strove to keep their children as much as possible from associating with the "vulgar herd," as they styled the laboring class of the community. In her secret heart Cora had long cherished a preference for Walter, though never, until the morning of which I write, had it been so openly avowed. And Walter, too, while knowing how far above him she was in point of position, had dared to dream of a time when a bright-haired woman, with a face much like that of the girlish Cora, would gladden his home, wherever it might be.

That noon, as we sat around the glowing stove, we played as children will, and it came my turn to "answer truly whom I intended to marry." Without a thought of the big apple, the snowy socks, or of any one in particular, I replied unhesitatingly—"The one I love best," and the question passed on to Cora, who was sitting by the side of Walter Beaumont. He had not joined in our sport, but now his eye left his book and rested upon Cora with an expression half fearful, half expectant. She, too,

glanced at him, and as if the spirit of prophecy were upon her, she said—"I shall not marry the one I love the best, but the one who has the most money, and can give me the handsomest *diamonds*. Sister Fanny has a magnificent set, and she looks so beautifully when she wears them."

Instantly there fell a shadow on Walter Beaumont's face, and his eye returned again to the Latin lettered page. But his thoughts were not of what was written there; he was thinking of the humble cottage on the borders of the wood, of the rag-carpet on the oaken floor, of the plain old-fashioned furniture, and of the gentle, loving woman who called him "her boy," and that spot her home. There were no *diamonds* there—no money—and Cora, if for these she married, would never be his wife. Early and late he toiled and studied, wearing his threadbare coat and coarse brown pants—for an education, such as he must have, admitted of no useless expenditure, and the costly gems which Cora craved were not his to give. In the pure, unselfish love springing up for her within his heart, there were diamonds of imperishable value, and these, together with the name he would make for himself, he would offer her, but nothing more, and for many weeks there was a shadow on his brow, though he was kind and considerate to her as of old.

As the spring and summer glided by, however, there came a change, and when, in the autumn, he left our village for New Haven, there was a happy, joyous look upon his face, while a tress of Cora's silken hair was lying next his heart. Every week he wrote to her, and Cora answered, always showing to me what she had written, but never a word of his. "There was too much love," she

said, "too much good advice in his letters for me to see," and thus the time passed on, until Walter, who had entered the junior class, was graduated with honor, and was about to commence a theological course at Andover, for he had made the ministry his choice. He was twenty-one now, and Cora was sixteen. Wondrously beautiful was she to look upon, with her fair young face, her soft brown eyes, and wavy hair. And Walter Beaumont loved her devotedly, believing too, that she in turn loved him, for one summer afternoon, in the green old woods which skirted the little village, she had sat by his side, and with the sunbeams glancing down upon her through the overhanging boughs, she had told him so, and promised some day to be his wife. Still, she would not hear of a positive engagement—both should be free to change their mind if they wished, she said, and with this Walter was satisfied.

"I have no *diamonds* to give you, darling," he said, drawing her close to him; and Cora, knowing to what he referred, answered that "*his* love was dearer to her than all the world besides." Alas, that woman should be so fickle!

The same train which carried Walter away, brought Mrs. Blanchard a letter from her daughter, a dashing, fashionable woman, who lived in the city, and who wished to bring her sister Cora "out" the coming winter. "She is old enough now," she wrote, "to be looking for a husband, and of course she'll never do anything in that by-place."

This proposition, which accorded exactly with Mrs. Blanchard's wishes, was joyfully acceded to by Cora, who, while anticipating the pleasure which awaited her, had

yet no thought of proving false to Walter, and in the letter which she wrote informing him of her plan, she assured him of her unchanging fidelity, little dreaming that the promise thus made would so soon be broken! Petted, caressed, flattered and admired, as she was in the circle of her sister's friends, how could she help growing worldly and vain, or avoid contrasting the plain, unassuming Walter, with the polished and gayly-dressed butterflies who thronged Mrs. Burton's drawing-room. When the summer came again, she did not return to us as we had expected, but we heard of her at Saratoga, and Newport, the admired of all admirers; while one, it was said, a man of high position and untold wealth, bid fair to win the beautiful belle. Meantime, her letters to Walter grew short and far between, ceasing at length altogether; and one day, during the second winter of her residence in the city, I received from her a package containing his miniature, the books he had given her, and the letters he had written. These she wished me to give him when next I saw him, bidding me tell him to think no more of one who was not worthy of him.

"To be plain, Lottie," she wrote, "I'm engaged, and though Mr. Douglass is not a bit like Walter, he has a great deal of money, drives splendid horses, and I reckon we shall get on well enough. I wish, though, he was not quite so old. You'll be shocked to hear that he is almost *fifty*, though he looks about *forty*! I know I don't like him as well as I did Walter, but after seeing as much of the world as I have, I could not settle down into the wife of a poor minister. I am not good enough, and you must tell him so. I hope he won't feel badly—poor Walter. I've kept the lock of his hair. I couldn't part with that;

but, of course, Mr. Douglass will never see it. *His* hair is gray! Good-by."

This was what she wrote, and when I heard from her again, she was Cora Douglass, and her feet were treading the shores of the old world, whither she had gone on a bridal tour.

In the solitude of his chamber, the young student learned the sad news from a paragraph in a city paper, and bowing his head upon the table, he strove to articulate, "It is well," but the flesh was weak, warring with the spirit, and the heart which Cora Blanchard had cruelly trampled down, clung to her still with a death-like fondness, and following her even across the waste of waters, cried out—"How can I give her up!" But when he remembered, as he ere long did, that 'twas a sin to love her now, he buried his face in his hands, and, calling on God to help him in this his hour of need, wept such tears as never again would fall for Cora Blanchard.

The roses in our garden were faded, and the leaves of autumn were piled upon the ground, ere he came to his home again, and I had an opportunity of presenting him with the package which many months before had been committed to my care. His face was very pale, and his voice trembled as he asked me—"Where is she now?"

"In Italy," I answered, adding that "her husband was said to be very wealthy."

Bowing mechanically, he walked away, and a year and a half went by ere I saw him again. Then he came among us as our minister. The old, white-haired pastor,

who for so long had told us of the Good Shepherd and the better land, was sleeping at last in the quiet graveyard, and the people had chosen young Walter Beaumont to fill his place. He was a splendid-looking man—tall, erect, and finely formed, with a most winning manner, and a face which betokened intellect of the highest order. We were proud of him, all of us—proud of our clergyman, who, on the third Sabbath in June, was to be ordained in the old brick church, before whose altar he had years ago been baptized, a smiling infant.

On the Thursday afternoon preceding the ordination, a large traveling carriage, covered with dust and laden with trunks, passed slowly through our village, attracting much attention. Seated within it was a portly, gray-haired man, resting his chin upon a gold-headed cane, and looking curiously out at the people in the street, who stared as curiously at him. Directly opposite him, and languidly reclining upon the soft cushions, was a white, proud-faced lady, who evidently felt no interest in what was passing around her, for her eyes were cast down, and her thought seemed busy elsewhere. I was sitting at my chamber window, gazing out upon them, and just as they drew near the gate, the lady raised her eyes—the soft, brown eyes, which once had won the love of Walter Beaumont, and in which there was now an unmistakeable look of anguish, as if the long eyelashes, drooping so wearily upon the colorless cheek, were constantly forcing back the hidden tears. And this was Cora Douglass, come back to us again from her travels in a foreign land! She knew me in a moment, and in her face there was much of her olden look as, bending forward, she smiled a greeting, and waved toward me her white,

jeweled hand, on which the *diamonds* flashed brightly in the sunlight.

The next morning we met, but not in the presence of the old man, her husband. Down in the leafy woods, about a quarter of a mile from Mrs. Beaumont's cottage, was a running brook and a mossy bank, overshadowed by the sycamore and elm. This, in the days gone by, had been our favorite resort. Here had we built our playhouse, washing our bits of broken china in the rippling stream—here had we watched the little fishes as they darted in and out of the deeper eddies—here had we conned our daily tasks—here had she listened to a tale of love, the memory of which seemed but a mocking dream, and here, as I faintly hoped, I found her. With a half-joyful, half-moaning cry, she threw her arms around my neck, and I could feel her tears dropping upon my face as she whispered, "Oh, Lottie, Lottie, we have met again by the dear old brook."

For a few moments she sobbed as if her heart would break, then suddenly drying her tears, she assumed a calm, cold, dignified manner, such as I had never seen in Cora Blanchard. Very composedly she questioned me of what I had done during her absence, telling me, too, of her travels, of the people she had seen and the places she had visited, but never a word said she of him she called her husband. From the bank where we sat, the village grave-yard was discernible, with its marble gleaming through the trees, and at last, as her eye wandered in that direction, she said, "Have any of our villagers died? Mother's letters were never very definite."

"Yes," I answered, "Our minister, Mr. Sumner, died two months ago."

"Who takes his place?" she asked; and, as if a suspicion of the truth were flashing upon her, her eyes turned toward me with an eager, startled glance.

"Walter Beaumont. He is to be ordained next Sabbath, and you are just in time," I replied, regretting my words the next instant, for never saw I so fearful a look of anguish as that which swept over her face, and was succeeded by a cold, hard, defiant expression, scarcely less painful to witness.

She would have questioned me of him, I think, had not an approaching footstep caught our ear, sending a crimson flush to Cora's hitherto marble cheek, and producing on me a most unpleasant sensation, for I knew that the gray-haired man now within a few paces of us, was he who called that young creature *his wife*. *Golden* was the chain by which he had bound her, and every link was set with diamonds and costly stones, but it had rusted and eaten to her very heart's core, for the most precious gem of all was missing from that chain—love for her husband, who, fortunately for his own peace of mind, was too conceited to dream how little she cared for him. He was not handsome, and still many would have called him a fine looking, middle-aged man, though there was something disagreeable in his thin, compressed lips and intensely black eyes—the one betokening a violent temper, and the other an indomitable will. To me he was exceedingly polite—rather too much so for my perfect ease, while toward Cora he tried to be very affectionate.

Seating himself at her side, and throwing his arm around her, he called her a "little truant," and asked "why she had run away from him."

Half pettishly she answered, "Because I like sometimes

to be alone," then, rising up and turning toward me she asked if "the water still ran over the old mill dam in the west woods just as it used to do," saying if it did, she wished to see it. "You can't go," she continued, addressing her husband, "for it is more than a mile, over fences and plowed fields."

This was sufficient, for Mr. Douglass was very fastidious in all matters pertaining to his dress, and had no fancy for soiling his white pants, or patent leathers. So Cora and I set off together, while he walked slowly back to the village. Scarcely was he out of sight, however, when, seating herself beneath a tree, and throwing her flat upon the ground, Cora announced her intention of not going any further.

"I only wished to be alone. I *breathe* so much better," she said, and when I looked inquiringly at her, she continued, "Never marry a man for his wealth, Lottie, unless you wish to become as hard, as wicked and unhappy as I am. John Douglass is worth more than half a million, and yet I would give it all if I were the same little girl who, six years ago, waded with you through the snow-drifts to school on that stormy day. Do you remember what we played that noon and my foolish remark that I would marry for *money* and *diamonds*! Woe is me, I've won them both!" and her tears fell fast on the sparkling gems which covered her slender fingers.

Just then I saw in the distance a young man whom I knew to be Walter Beaumont. He seemed to be approaching us, and when Cora became aware of that, she started up and grasping my arm, hurried away, saying, as she cast backward a fearful glance, "I would rather die than meet him now. I am not prepared."

For the remainder of the way we walked on in silence, until we reached her mother's gate, where we found her husband waiting for her. Bidding me good morning she followed him slowly up the graveled walk and I saw her no more until the following Sabbath. It was a gloriously beautiful morning, and at an early hour the old brick church was filled to overflowing, for Walter had many friends, and they came together gladly to see him made a minister of God. During the first part of the service he was very pale, and his eye wandered often toward the large, square pew where sat a portly man and a beautiful young woman, richly attired in satin and jewels. It had cost her a struggle to be there, but she felt that she must look again on one whom she had loved so much and so deeply wronged. So she came, and the sight of him standing there in his early manhood, his soft brown hair clustering about his brow, and his calm, pale face wearing an expression almost angelic, was more than she could bear, and leaning forward she kept her countenance concealed from view until the ceremony was ended, and Walter's clear, musical voice announced the closing hymn. Then she raised her head, and her face, seen through the folds of her costly veil, looked haggard and ghastly, as if a fierce storm of passion had swept over her. By the door she paused, and when the newly-ordained clergyman passed out, she offered him her hand, the hand which, when he held it last, was pledged to him. There were *diamonds* on it now—diamonds of value rare, but their brightness was hateful to that wretched woman, for she knew at what a fearful price they had been bought.

They did not meet again, and *only once* more did Walter see her; then, from our door, he looked out upon her

as with her husband she dashed by on horseback, her long cloth skirt almost sweeping the ground, and the plumes of her velvet cap waving in the air.

"Mrs. Douglass is a fine rider," was all Walter said, and the tone of his voice indicated that she was becoming to him an object of indifference. Desperately had he fought with his affection for her, winning the victory at last, and now the love he once had felt for her was slowly and surely dying out. The next week, tiring of our dull village life, Cora left us, going to Nahant, where she spent most of the summer, and when in the winter we heard from her again, she was a widow—the sole heir of her husband who had died suddenly, and generously left her that for which she married him—his money.

"Will Walter Beaumont marry Cora now?" I had asked myself many a time, without, however, arriving at any definite conclusion, when a little more than a year succeeding Mr. Douglass's death, she wrote, begging me to come to her, as she was very lonely, and the presence of an old friend would do her good. I complied with her request, and within a few days was an inmate of her luxurious home, where every thing indicated the wealth of its possessor. And Cora, though robed in deepest black, was more like herself, more like the Cora of other days, than I had seen her before since her marriage. Of her husband she spoke freely and always with respect, saying he had been kinder far to her than she had deserved. Of Walter, too, she talked, appearing much gratified when I told her how he was loved and appreciated by his people.

One morning when we sat together in her little sewing room, she said, "I have done what you, perhaps, will

consider a very unwomanly act. I have written to Walter Beaumont. Look," and she placed in my hand a letter, which she bade me read. It was a wild, strange thing, telling him of the anguish she had endured, of the tears she had shed, of the love which through all she had cherished for him, and begging of him to forgive her if possible, and be to her again what he had been years ago. She was not worthy of him, she said, but he could make her better, and in language the most touching, she besought of him not to cast her off, or despise her because she had stepped so far aside from womanly delicacy as to write to him this letter. "I will not insult you," she wrote in conclusion, "by telling you of the *money* for which I sold myself, but it is mine now, lawfully mine, and most gladly would I share it with you."

"You will not send him this?" I said. "You cannot be in earnest?"

But she was determined, and lest her resolution should give way, she rang the bell, ordering the servant who appeared to take it at once to the office. He obeyed, and during the day she was unusually gay, singing snatches of old songs, and playing several lively airs upon her piano, which for months had stood unopened and untouched. That evening, as the sun went down, and the full moon rose over the city, she asked me to walk with her, and we, ere long, found ourselves several streets distant from that in which she lived. Groups of people were entering a church near by, and from a remark which we overheard, we learned that there was to be a wedding.

"Let us go in," she said, "it may be some one I know,"

and entering together, we took our seats just in front of the altar.

Scarcely were we seated when a rustling of satin announced the approach of the bridal party, and in a moment they appeared moving slowly up the aisle. My first attention was directed toward the bride, a beautiful young creature, with a fair sweet face, and curls of golden hair falling over her white, uncovered neck.

"Isn't she lovely?" I whispered; but Cora did not hear me.

With her hands locked tightly together, her lips firmly compressed, and her cheeks of an ashen hue, she was gazing fixedly at the bridegroom, on whom I, too, now looked, starting quickly, for it was our minister, Walter Beaumont! The words were few which made them one, Walter and the young girl at his side, and when the ceremony was over, Cora arose, and leaning heavily upon my arm, went out into the open air, and on through street after street, until her home was reached. Then, without a word, we parted—I going to my room, while she, through the live-long night, paced up and down the long parlors where no eye could witness the working of the mighty sorrow which had come upon her.

The next morning she was calm, but very, very pale, saying not a word of last night's adventure. Neither did she speak of it for several days, and then she said, rather abruptly, "I would give all I possess if I had never sent that letter. The mortification is harder to bear even than Walter's loss. But he will not tell of it, I'm sure. He is too good—too noble," and tears, the first she had shed since that night, rained through her thin, white fingers. It came at last—a letter bearing Walter's super-

scription, and with trembling hands she opened it, finding, as she had expected, his wedding card, while on a tiny sheet was written, "God pity you, Cora, even as I do.—WALTER."

"Walter! Walter!" she whispered, and her quivering lips touched once the loved name which she was never heard to breathe again.

From that day Cora Douglass faded, and when the autumnal days were come, and the distant hills were bathed in the hazy October light, she died. But not in the noisy city, for she had asked to be taken home, and in the pleasant room where we had often sat together, she bade me her last good-by. They buried her on the Sabbath, and Walter's voice was sad and low as with Cora's coffin at his feet he preached from the words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." His young wife, too, wept over the early dead, who had well nigh been her rival, and whose beautiful face wore a calm, peaceful smile, as if she were at rest.

There was a will, they said, and in it Walter was generously remembered, while to his wife was given an ivory box, containing Cora's *diamonds*—necklace, bracelets, pin and ear-rings—all were there; and Walter, as he looked upon them, drew nearer to him his fair girl-wife, who but for these, might not, perchance, have been to him what she was—his dearest earthly treasure.

BAD SPELLING.

THE last notes of the bell which duly summoned to their task the pupils of Madame Duvant's fashionable seminary had ceased, and in the school-room, recently so silent, was heard the low hum of voices, interspersed occasionally with a suppressed titter from some girl more mischievous than her companions. Very complacently Madame Duvant looked over the group of young faces, mentally estimating the probable gain she should receive from each, for this was the first day of the term, then with a few low-spoken words to the row of careworn, pale-faced teachers, she smoothed down the folds of her heavy grey satin and left the room, just as a handsome traveling-carriage stopped before the door.

The new arrival proved to be a fashionably-dressed woman, who, with an air of extreme hauteur, swept into the parlor, followed by two young girls, one apparently sixteen and the other fourteen years of age. The younger and, as some would call her, the plainer looking of the two, was unmistakably a "poor relation," for her face bore the meek, patient look of a dependent, while the proud black eyes and scornfully curved lip of the other, marked her as the daughter of the lady, who, after glancing about the room and satisfying herself that the chairs, tables, and so forth, were *refined*, gave her name

as "Mrs. Greenleaf, wife of the Hon. Mr. Greenleaf, of Herkimer co., N. Y."

"I have come," said she, apparently speaking to Madame Duvant, but looking straight at the window, "I've come to place my daughter Arabella under your charge, and if she is pleased with your discipline, she will finish her education here—graduate—though I care but little for that, except that it sounds well. She is our only child, and, of course, a thorough education in the lower English branches is not at all necessary. I wish her to be highly accomplished in French, Italian, music, drawing, painting, dancing, and, perhaps, learn something of the old poets, so as to be able to talk about them a little, if necessary, but as for the other branches, such as geography, history, arithmetic, grammar, and the like, she can learn them by herself, and it is not my wish that she should waste her time over any thing so common. These will do for Mildred," and she glanced toward the *poor relation*, whose eyes were bent upon the carpet.

"She is the child of my husband's sister, and we have concluded to educate her for a teacher, so I wish you to be very thorough with her in all those stupid things which Arabella is not to study."

Madame Duvant bowed, and Mrs. Greenleaf continued, "Last term they were at Bloomington Seminary, and, if you'll believe it, the principal insisted upon putting Arabella into the spelling-class, just because she didn't chance to spell every word of her first composition correctly! I dare say it was more Mildred's fault than hers, for she acknowledged to me that 'twas one of Mildred's old pieces that she found and copied."

An angry flash of Arabella's large black eyes, and a

bright red spot on Mildred's cheek, were the only emotions manifested by the young girls, and Mrs. Greenfield proceeded: "Of course, I wouldn't submit to it—my daughter spelling *baker*, and all that nonsense, so I took her away at once. It was my wish that Mildred should remain, but husband, who is peculiar, wouldn't hear of it, and said she should go where Arabella did, so I've brought them both."

After little further conversation, it was arranged that Miss Arabella should go through a course of merely fashionable accomplishments, Madame Duvant assuring her mother that neither spelling-book nor dictionary should in any way annoy her. Mildred, on the contrary, was to be thoroughly drilled in every thing necessary for a teacher to know, Mrs. Greenleaf hinting that the sooner her education was completed the better she would be pleased, for it cost a great deal to clothe, feed and school her. Madame Duvant promised to execute the wishes of her patron, who gathered up her flowing robes, and with a dozen or more kisses for her daughter, and a nod of her head for Mildred, stepped into her carriage and was driven rapidly away.

* * * * *

Just across the spacious grounds of the Duvant Seminary, and divided from them by a wall which it seemed almost impossible to scale, stood a huge stone building, whose hacked walls, bare floors and dingy windows—from which were frequently suspended a cap, a pair of trousers, or a boy's leg—stamped it at once as "The College," the veriest pest in the world, as Madame Duvant called it, when, with all the vigilance both of herself and Argus-eyed teachers, she failed to keep her young ladies from making

the acquaintance of the students, who winked at them in church, bowed to them in the streets, tied notes to stones and threw them over the ponderous wall, while the girls waved their handkerchiefs from their windows, and in various other ways eluded the watchfulness of their teachers. A great acquisition to the fun-loving members of the seminary was Arabella Greenleaf, and she had scarcely been there six weeks ere she was perfectly well acquainted with every student whom she considered at all worth knowing. But upon only one were her brightest glances and her most winsome smiles lavished, and that was George Clayton, a young man from South Carolina, who was said to be very wealthy. He was too honorable to join in the intrigues of his companions, and when at last he became attracted by the witching eyes and dashing manners of Arabella Greenleaf, he went boldly to Madame Duvant and asked permission to see the young lady in the parlor.

His request was granted, and during the two years he remained at college, he continued occasionally to call upon Arabella, who, each time that he saw her, seemed more pleasing, for she was beautiful, and when she chose to be so was very courteous and agreeable. One evening when George called as usual and asked to see her, he waited a long time, and was about making up his mind to leave, when a fair, delicate looking girl, with deep blue eyes and auburn hair, entered the room, introducing herself as *Miss Graham*, the cousin of Arabella, who, she said, was indisposed and unable to come down.

"She bade me say that she was very sorry not to see you," added Mildred, for she it was, blushing deeply as she met the eager, admiring eye of George Clayton.

Gladly would he have detained her, but with a polite good evening, she left him in a perfect state of bewilderment. "Strange that I never observed her before, for I must have seen her often," he thought, as he slowly wended his way back to his rooms, "and stranger still that Arabella never told me she had a cousin here."

The next time he met Arabella his first inquiry was for her cousin, and why she had never mentioned her. With a heightened color Arabella answered, "Oh, she's a little body, who never cares to be known—a perfect bookworm and man-hater."

The words bookworm and man-hater produced upon George Clayton a far different effect from what Arabella had intended, and he often found himself thinking of the soft blue eyes of Mildred Graham. Unlike some men, there was nothing terrible to him in a bookish woman, and he might, perhaps, have sought another interview with Mildred, but for a circumstance which threw her entirely in the shade.

The annual examination of Madame Duvant's seminary was drawing near. Arabella was to graduate, while both she and Mildred were competitors for a prize offered for the best composition. There was a look of wonder on Mildred's face, when she saw her cousin's name among the list, for composition was something in which Arabella did not excel. Greatly then did Mildred marvel when day after day she found her, pencil in hand, and apparently lost in thought, as she filled one sheet after another, until at last it was done.

"Now, Milly," said Arabella, "You correct the spelling and copy it for me—that's a good girl."

Mildred had acted in this capacity too often to refuse,

and with a martyr's patience, she corrected and copied the manuscript, wondering the while from whence came the sudden inspiration which had so brightened Arabella's ideas. But if she had any suspicions of the truth she kept them to herself, handing her own composition in with that of her cousin, and calmly waiting the result.

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The examination was over. Arabella, who knew exactly what questions would be put to her, had acquitted herself with great credit, and her proud lady mother, who was one of the numerous visitors, fanned herself complacently as she heard on all sides the praises of her daughter.

And now nothing remained but the evening exhibition, at which music and the prize compositions formed the chief entertainment. At an early hour the large school-rooms were densely crowded. Among the first who came was George Clayton—securing a seat as near as possible to the stage, so that he should not lose a single word. He himself had graduated but two weeks previously, and was now about to make the tour of Europe together with his father, who was present. They were to sail the next night, and at nine o'clock this evening they were to leave for New York. During the examination Arabella had risen greatly in George's estimation, and if she had seemed beautiful to him then, she was tenfold more so now, when, with flowing curls and simple white muslin dress, she tripped gracefully across the stage, and seating herself at the piano, played and sang with exquisite skill the well-known song entitled, "No More, Never More."

Then followed the reading of the compositions, Mil-

dred being called upon first. In a clear and peculiarly sweet voice she read, chaining to perfect silence her audience, which, when she was done, greeted her with noisy cheers, whispering one to another that she was sure to win. Arabella, at her own request, was the last. With proud, flashing eyes and queenly air, she coolly surveyed the mass of heads before her, caught an admiring glance from George Clayton, and then, with a steady hand unrolled her manuscript and read. Her subject was "The Outward and the Inward Life," and no gray-haired sage ever handled it more skilfully than she. When she finished one universal burst of applause shook the building to its centre, while her name was on every lip as she triumphantly left the room. Just then a distant bell struck the hour of nine, and George Clayton arose to go. He was sure of Arabella's success, and in the hall below, whither she had gone to bid him adieu, he shook her hand warmly, telling her how happy it made him to see her thus victorious, and winning from her a promise to write to him when he should be over the sea.

Half an hour later and the night express was bearing him far away. Half an hour later, and with flushed brow Arabella stood up and received the prize, which consisted of two elegantly bound volumes of Wordsworth and Coleridge.

Forty minutes later, and from the seat by the door, a little bent, weird-looking woman arose, and making her way through the crowd, advanced until she stood upon the stage, then stretching her long, bony finger toward Arabella, who had returned, she said, "I am a lover of justice, and should I hold my peace, the very stones would cry out against me. Yonder young lady has p-

right to the prize, for the piece which she has palmed off as her own appeared in the *Woodland Gazette*, a paper published in an obscure New Hampshire village. How she came by it, she can, perhaps, explain, but I cannot."

At the commencement of this strange speech, Arabella arose as if to defy the woman, who was thus blasting her good name, but at the mention of the *Woodland Gazette* she fainted and was carried from the room. Madame Duvant now came forward and addressed a few low-spoken words to the woman, who answered aloud, "I have the best of reasons for what I have said. My son, who lives in New Hampshire, occasionally sends me the *Gazette*, and in one number, which came nearly a year ago, appeared this very article, taken originally from an old English paper."

"Prove it! Produce the paper!" fiercely ejaculated Mrs. Greenleaf, as she left the room in quest of her daughter.

"I can do so," answered the woman; "I never tore up a newspaper in my life, and if the audience will wait for the space of ten minutes, I can show them the very article"—saying which she glided noiselessly from the room.

She was a strange, half-crazy old creature, of wonderful memory, who occupied a small cottage in the suburbs of the village, and many doubts were expressed as to the veracity of her statement. But these were soon put to flight by her reappearance. Unfolding the dingy yellow paper, she read aloud to her astonished hearers the article, which proved to have been taken from the *London Examiner*. There was now no longer a shadow of doubt, and the prize was withdrawn from the treacherous Ara-

bella, and as Mildred's composition was pronounced the next in order, it was bestowed upon her.

Mortified, indignant and almost frantic at this public disgrace, Arabella finally confessed to having stolen the piece from a paper sent her some months before by a former schoolmate. The next morning she left the village, heaping her pent-up wrath upon the head of her innocent cousin, who was destined in more ways than one to rival her.

* * * * *

Three months had passed away since the night of the exhibition, and in a private parlor at a London hotel sat George Clayton, rather impatiently awaiting the return of his servant from the post-office. As yet he had received no letter from Arabella, for though she had written it had failed to reach him, and while he in the Old World was marvelling at her long delay, she in the New was wondering why he did not answer. The mortification which she had endured affected her deeply, bringing on at last a slow fever, which confined her to her bed, where for weeks she lay, carefully attended by Mildred, who once, when she complained of George's neglect, suggested the possibility of his not having received the letter. This was a new idea to Arabella, and as she was herself unable to write, she persuaded Mildred to do it for her, and strange to say, the two letters reached their destination at the same time.

With eager haste George took them from his servant, who soon went out leaving him alone. The handwriting of both was not alike, and in some trepidation the young man broke the seal of the one bearing the more recent date. It was beautifully written, and mentally complimenting the fair writer, George opened the other, utter-

ing an exclamation of surprise ere he had read a dozen lines. It was a sickly, sentimental affair, taken partly from an old letterwriter, and containing many highflown sentences concerning the "*pearling rill*," the "*silverey starlite*" and the "*rozy morn*," which, being spelled as they were, presented a most formidable aspect to the fastidious young man.

Although Arabella had taken much pains with her letter, at least one-fourth of the words were misspelt, and by the time George had finished reading, he entertained no other feeling toward the writer than one of disgust, to think that, with all her showy accomplishments, she had neglected what to him was the most important of all, for in nothing is the ignorance of a young lady more apparent than in a badly-spelled letter. It was a long time ere he answered it, and then the few lines which he wrote were so cold, so different from his first, that in a fit of anger Arabella tossed it into the fire, repenting the act the moment after, and, as if to make amends, writing in return a long letter, to which there came no response, and thus the correspondence ended.

Eighteen months later, and again Madame Duvant's rooms were crowded to overflowing, but this time Arabella Greenleaf was not there, though George Clayton was, eagerly watching each word and movement of Mildred Graham, whose uncle had insisted upon her remaining at school until she, too, should graduate, and who now, justly, received the highest honors of her class. Very beautifully looked the young girl, and as she modestly received the compliments of her friends, George Clayton's was not the only admiring eye which rested upon her, for many now paid her homage.

That night George asked to see her alone. His request was granted, and when next she parted from him it was as if betrothed. Immediately after George's return from Europe, he had heard the story of Arabella's perfidy, and if no other circumstances had interposed to wean him from her entirely, this alone would have done it, for he could not respect a woman who would thus meanly stoop to deception. He had lingered in G—— for the purpose of renewing his former acquaintance with Mildred, the result of which we have seen.

Mortified beyond measure, Arabella heard of her cousin's engagement, and when George came at last to claim his bride, she refused to see him, wilfully absenting herself from home that she should not witness the bridal, which took place one bright October morning, when the fore-t trees, as if in honor of the occasion, were dressed in their most gorgeous robes, and the birds were singing their farewell songs.

New misfortunes, however, awaited poor Arabella, for scarcely was Mildred gone to her southern home when the red flag of the auctioneer waved from the windows of Mr. Greenleaf's luxurious house, which, with its costly furniture, was sold to the highest bidder, and the family were left dependent upon their own exertions for support. When the first shock was over, Mr. Greenleaf proposed that his daughter should teach, and thus bring into use her boasted accomplishments. For a time Arabella refused, but hearing at last of a situation which she thought might please her, she applied for it by letter. But alas, the mistake she made when she abandoned the spelling-book for the piano, again stood in the way, for no one would employ a teacher so lamentably ignorant of ortho-

graphy. Nor is it at all probable she will ever rise higher than her present position—that of a *plain* sewer—until she goes back to *first principles*, and commences again the despised column beginning with “*baker*!”

MAGGIE LEE.

THE usually quiet little village of Ellerton was, one June morning, thrown into a state of great excitement by the news that the large stone building on the hill, which, for several years had been shut up, was at last to have an occupant, and that said occupant was no less a personage than its owner, Graham Thornton, who, at the early age of twenty-eight, had been chosen to fill the responsible office of judge of the county. Weary of city life, and knowing that a home in the country would not materially interfere with the discharge of his new duties, particularly as Ellerton was within half an hour's ride of the city, young Thornton had conceived the idea of fitting up the old stone house, bequeathed to him by his grandfather, in a style suited to his abundant means and luxurious taste. Accordingly, for several weeks, the people of Ellerton were kept in a constant state of anxiety, watching, wondering and guessing, especially Miss Olivia Macey, who kept a small store in the outskirts of the village, and whose fertile imagination supplied whatever her neighbors lacked in actual knowledge of the proceedings at “Greystone Hall,” as Judge Thornton called his place of residence.

At last, every thing was completed, and the day appointed for the arrival of the Judge, who, disliking con-

fusion, had never once been near his house, but, after a few general directions, had left the entire arrangement of the building and grounds to the management of one whom he knew to be a connoisseur in such matters. As was very natural, a great deal of curiosity was felt concerning the arrival of the distinguished stranger, and as his mother, a proud, stately woman, was to accompany him, Miss Olivia Macey, who boasted of having once been a school-mate of the haughty lady, resolved upon meeting them at the depot, thinking she should thereby show them proper respect.

"So Maggie," said she to her niece, a dark-haired, white-browed girl of fifteen, who, at noon, came bounding in from school, "so Maggie, you must watch the store, for there's no knowing how long I shall be gone. Miss Thornton may ask me home with her, and it would not be polite to refuse."

For an instant Maggie's dark brown eyes danced with mischief as she thought how improbable it was that the lofty Mrs. Thornton would seek to renew her acquaintance with one in Miss Macey's humble position, but the next moment they filled with tears, and she said, "Oh, aunt, *must* I stay from school again? It is the third time within a week. I never shall know anything!"

"Never mind, Mag," shouted little Ben, tossing his cap across the room and helping himself to the largest piece of pie upon the dinner-table. "Never mind. I'll stay with you, for I don't like to go to school any way. And we'll get our lessons at home."

Maggie knew how useless it would be to argue the point, so with a dejected air she seated herself at the open window and silently watched her aunt until she disap-

peared in the distance—then taking up her book, she tried to study, but could not, for the heavy pain at her heart which kept whispering of injustice done to her, unconsciously, perhaps, by the only mother she had ever known. Very dear to Miss Macey were the orphan children of her only sister, and faithfully did she strive to fulfill her trust, but she could not conceal her partiality for fun-loving, curly-haired Ben, nor the fact that the sensitive and ambitious Maggie, who thirsted for knowledge, was wholly unappreciated and misunderstood. Learning—learning was what Maggie craved, and she sat there alone that bright June afternoon, holding upon her lap the head of her sleeping brother, and watching the summer shadows as they chased each other over the velvety grass in the meadow beyond, she wondered if it would ever be thus with her—would there never come a time when she could pursue her studies undisturbed, and then, as the thought that this day made her *fifteen* years of age, her mind went forward to the future, and she said aloud—"Yes—three years from to-day and I shall be free—free as the air I breathe!"

But why that start, sweet Maggie Lee? Why that involuntary shudder as you think of the long three years from now? She cannot tell, but the shadows deepen on her fair, girlish face, and leaning her brow upon her hand, she thinks long and earnestly of what the three years may bring. A footstep on the floor—the first which has fallen there that afternoon—and Maggie looks up to see before her a tall, fine-looking man, who, the moment his eye fell upon her, checked the *whistle*, intended for his dog, which was trembling on his lip, and lift-

ing his hat deferentially, he asked if "this were Miss Macey's store?"

"Yes, sir," answered Maggie, and laying Bennie gently down, she went round behind the counter, while the young man, gazing curiously at her, continued, "You surely are not Miss Macey?"

There was a most comical expression in the brown eyes which met the black ones of the stranger, as Maggie answered, "No sir, I am nobody but Maggie Lee."

There must have been something attractive either in the name or the little maiden who bore it, for long after the gentleman had received the articles for which he came, he lingered, asking the young girl numberless questions and playing with little Ben, who, now wide awake, met his advances more than half way, and was on perfectly familiar terms both with the stranger and the dog Ponto, who had stretched his shaggy length before the door.

"Mag cries, she does, when Aunt Livy makes her stay home from school," said Ben, at last, beginning to feel neglected and wishing to attract attention.

Showing his white, handsome teeth, the gentleman playfully smoothed the silken curls of little Ben, and turning to the blushing Maggie, asked "if she were fond of books?"

"Oh, I love them so much," was the frank, impulsive answer, and ere ten minutes had passed away, Judge Thornton, for he it was, understood Maggie's character as well as if he had known her a lifetime.

Books, poetry, music, paintings, flowers, she worshiped them all, and without the slightest means either of gratifying her taste.

"I have in my library many choice books, to which you are welcome at any time when you will call at Greystone Hall," the stranger said at last.

"Greystone Hall!" gasped Maggie, the little red spots coming out all over her neck and face—"Greystone Hall!—then you must be——"

"Judge Thornton, and your friend hereafter," answered the gentleman, offering his hand and bidding her good-by.

There are moments which leave their impress upon one's lifetime, changing instantaneously, as it were, our thoughts and feelings, and such an one had come to Maggie Lee, who was roused from a deep reverie by the shrill voice of her aunt, exclaiming, "Well, I've been on a Tom-fool's errand once in my life. Here I've waited in that hot depot over two trains, and heard at the last minute that Mrs. Thornton and her son came up last night, and I hain't seen them after all. It's too bad."

Very quietly Maggie told of the judge's call, repeating all the particulars of the interview; then stealing away to her chamber, she thought again, wondering *where* and *what* she would be three years from that day.

* * * * *

A year has passed away, and Graham Thornton, grown weary of his duties, has resigned the office of judge, and turned school-teacher, so the gossiping villagers say, and with some degree of truth, for regularly each day Maggie Lee and Ben go up to Greystone Hall, where they recite their lessons to its owner, though always in the presence of its lady mistress, who has taken a strange fancy to Maggie Lee, and whose white hand has more than once rested caressingly on the dark, glossy hair of the young

girl. To a casual observer, the Maggie of *sixteen* is little changed from the Maggie of *fifteen* years; but to him, her teacher, she is not the same, for while in some respects she is more a woman and less a child, in every thing pertaining to himself she is far more a child than when first he met her one short year ago. Then there was about her a certain self-reliance, which is now all gone, and he who has looked so often into the thoughts and feelings of that childish heart knows he can sway her at his will.

"But 'tis only a girlish friendship she feels for him," he says; "only a brotherly interest he entertains for her;" and so day after day she comes to his library, and on a low stool, her accustomed seat at his side, she drinks in new inspirations with which to feed that girlish friendship, while he, gazing down into her soft, brown, dreamy eyes, feels more and more how necessary to his happiness is her daily presence there. And if sometimes the man of the world asks himself "where all this will end?" his conscience is quieted by the answer that Maggie Lee merely feels toward him as she would toward any person who had done her a like favor. So all through the bright summer days and through the hazy autumn time, Maggie dreams on, perfectly happy, though she knows not why, for never yet has a thought of *love* for him entered her soul. She only knows that he to her is the dearest, best of friends, and Greystone Hall the loveliest spot on earth, but the wish that *she* might ever be its mistress has never been conceived.

With the coming of the holidays the lessons were suspended for a time, for there was to be company at the hall, and its master would need all his leisure.

"I shall miss you so much," he said to Maggie, as he

walked with her across the fields which led to her humble home. "I shall miss you, but the claims of society must be met, and these ladies have long talked of visiting us."

"Are they young and handsome?" Maggie asked involuntarily.

"Only one—Miss Helen Deane is accounted a beauty. She is an heiress, too, and the best match in all the city of L——," answered Mr. Thornton, more to himself than Maggie, who at the mention of Helen Deane felt a cold shadow folding itself around her heart.

Alas, poor Maggie Lee. The world has long since selected the proud Helen as the future bride of Graham Thornton, who, as he walks slowly back across the snow-clad field, tramples upon the delicate footprints you have made, and wishes it were thus easy to blot out from his heart all memory of you! Poor, poor Maggie Lee, Helen Deane *is* beautiful, far more beautiful than you, and when in her robes of purple velvet, with her locks of golden hair shading her soft eyes of blue, she flits like a sunbeam through the spacious rooms of Greystone Hall, waking their echoes with her voice of richest melody, what marvel if Graham Thornton does pay her homage, and reserves all thoughts of you for the midnight hour, when the hall is still and Helen's voice no longer heard? He is but a man—a man, too, of the world, and so, though you, Maggie Lee, are very dear to him, he does not think it possible that he can raise you to his rank—make you the honored mistress of his home, and still lower himself not one iota from the station he has ever filled. And though his mother loves you, too, 'tis not with a mother's love, and should children ever climb her knee calling her son their sire, she would deem you a *governess* befitting

such as they, and nothing more. But all this Maggie does not know, and when the visiting is over and Helen Deane is gone, she goes back to her old place and sits again at the feet of Graham Thornton, never wondering why he seems so often lost in thought, or why he looks so oft into her eyes of brown, trying to read there that he has not wronged her.

* * * * *

Another year has passed, and with the light of the full moon shining down upon him, Graham Thornton walks again with Maggie Lee across the fields where now the summer grass is growing. The foot-prints in last winter's snow have passed away just as the light will go out from Maggie's heart when Graham Thornton shall have told the tale he has come with her to tell. With quivering lips and bloodless cheek she listened while he told her indifferently, as if it were a piece of news she had probably heard before, that when the next full moon should shine on Greystone Hall, Helen Deane would be there—his bride!

"This, of course, will effectually break up our pleasant meetings," he continued, looking everywhere save in Maggie's face. "And this I regret—but my books are still at your disposal. You will like Helen, I think, and will call on her of course."

They had reached the little gate, and, taking Maggie's hand, he would have detained her for a few more parting words, but she broke away, and in reply to his last question, hurriedly answered, "Yes, yes."

The next moment he was alone—alone in the bright moonlight. The door was shut. There was a barrier between himself and Maggie Lee, a barrier his own hands had

built, and never again, so long as he lived, would Graham Thornton's conscience be at rest. Amid all the pomp of his bridal day—at the hour when, resplendent with beauty, Helen stood by his side at the holy altar, and breathed the vows which made her his forever—amid the gay festivities which followed, and the noisy mirth which for days pervaded his home, there was ever a still, small voice which whispered to him of the great wrong he had done to Maggie Lee, who never again was seen at Greystone Hall.

Much the elder Mrs. Thornton marveled at her absence, and once when her carriage was rolling past the door of the little store, she bade her coachman stop, while she herself went in to ask if her favorite were ill. Miss Olivia's early call at Greystone Hall had never been returned, and now she bowed coldly and treated her visitor with marked reserve, until she learned why she had come; then, indeed, her manner changed, but she could not tell her how, on the night when Graham Thornton had cruelly torn the veil from Maggie's heart, leaving it crushed and broken, she had found her long after midnight out in the tall, damp grass, where, in the wild abandonment of grief she had thrown herself; nor how, in a calmer moment she had told her sad-story, exonerating him from wrong, and blaming only herself for not having learned sooner how much she loved one so far above her, so she simply answered, "Yes, she took a violent cold and has been sick for weeks. Her mother died of consumption; I'm afraid Maggie will follow."

"Poor girl, to die so young," sighed Mrs. Thornton, as she returned to her carriage and was driven back to Greystone Hall, where, in a recess of the window Graham

sat, his arm around his wife, and his fingers playing with the curls of her golden hair.

But the hand dropped nervously at his side when his mother startled him with the news that "Maggie Lee was dying." Very wonderingly the large blue eyes of Helen followed him, as, feigning sudden faintness, he fled out into the open air, which, laden though it was with the perfume of the summer flowers, had yet no power to quiet the voice within which told him that if Maggie died, he alone was guilty of her death. "But whatever I can do to atone for my error shall be done," he thought at last, and until the chill November wind had blasted the last bud, the choicest fruit and flowers which grew at Greystone Hall daily found entrance to the chamber of the sick girl, who would sometimes push them away, as if there still lingered among them the atmosphere they had breathed.

"They remind me so much of the the past that I can not endure them in my presence," she said one day when her aunt brought her a beautiful bouquet, composed of her favorite flowers, and the hot tears rained over the white, wasted face, as she ordered them from the room.

Much she questioned both her aunt, and Bennie of her rival, whose beauty was the theme of the whole village, and once, when told that she was passing, she hastened to the window, but her cheek grew whiter still, and her hands clasped each other involuntarily as she saw by the side of the fair Helen the form of Graham Thornton. They both were looking toward her window, and as Helen met the burning gaze, she exclaimed, "Oh, Graham, it is terrible. It makes me faint," and shudderingly she drew nearer to her husband, who, to his dying hour, never for-

got the wild, dark eyes which looked down so reproachfully upon him that memorable wintry day.

* * * * *

Three years have passed away since the time when first we met with Maggie Lee—three years which seemed so long to her then, and which have brought her so much pain. She has watched the snow and ice as they melted from off the hill-side. She has seen the grass spring up by the open door—has heard the robin singing in the old oak tree—has felt the summer air upon her cheek. She has reached her *eighteenth* birthday, and ere another sun shall rise will indeed be free.

"Oh, I cannot see her die," cried poor little Ben, when he saw the pallor stealing over her face, and running out into the yard he threw himself upon the grass, sobbing bitterly, "My sister, oh, my sister."

"Is she worse?" said the voice of Graham Thornton.

He was passing in the street and had heard the wailing cry. Ben knew that in some way Judge Thornton was connected with his grief, but he answered respectfully, "She is dying. Oh, Maggie, Maggie. What shall I do without her?"

"You shall live with me," answered Mr. Thornton.

'Twas a sudden impulse, and thinking the assurance that her brother should be thus provided for would be a comfort to the dying girl, he glided noiselessly into the sick room. But she did not know him, and falling on his knees by her side, he wept like a little child. "She was sleeping," they said, at last, and lifting up his head, he looked upon her as she slept, while a fear, undefined and terrible, crept over him, she lay so still and motionless. At length rising to his feet, he bent him down so low

that his lips touched hers, and then, without a word, he went out from her presence, for *he* knew that Maggie Lee *was dead!*

The next day, at sunset, they buried her in the valley where the mound could always be seen from the window of Graham Thornton's room, and, as with folded arms and aching heart he stood by, while they lowered the coffin to its resting-place, he felt glad that it was so. "It will make me a better man," he thought, "for when evil passions rise, and I am tempted to do wrong, I have only to look across the fields toward the little grave which but for me would not have been made so soon, and I shall be strengthened to do what is right."

Slowly and sadly he walked away, going back to his home, where, in a luxuriously furnished chamber, on a couch whose silken hangings swept the floor, lay his wife, and near her his infant daughter, that day four weeks of age. As yet she had no name, and when the night had closed upon them, and it was dark within the room, Graham Thornton drew his chair to the side of his wife, and in low, subdued tones, told her of the fair young girl that day buried from his sight. Helen was his wife, a gentle, faithful wife, and he could not tell her how much he had loved Maggie Lee, and that but for his foolish pride she would perhaps at that moment have been where Helen was, instead of sleeping in her early grave. No, he could not tell her this, but he told her Maggie had been very dear to him, and that he feared it was for the love of him that she had died. "I wronged her, Nellie, darling," he said smoothing the golden tresses which lay upon the pillow. "*I* broke her heart, and now that she is gone I would honor her memory by

calling our first-born daughter 'MAGGIE LEE.' 'Tis a beautiful name," he continued, "and you will not refuse my request."

There was much of pride in Helen Thornton's nature, and she did refuse, for days and even weeks; but when she saw the shadows deepened on the brow of her husband, who would stand for hours looking out through the open window toward the valley where slept the village dead, and when the mother, in pity for her son, joined also in the request, she yielded; and, as if the sacrifice were accepted and the atonement good, the first smile which ever dimpled the infant's cheek, played on its mouth, as with its large, strange, bright eyes fixed upon its father's face, it was baptized "Maggie Lee."

* * * * *

Four years of sunshine and storm have fallen upon Maggie's grave, where now a costly marble stands, while the handsome iron fence and the well-kept ground within show that some hand of love is often busy there. In a distant city Ben is striving to overcome his old dislike for books, and seeking to make himself what he knows his sister would wish him to be. At home, the little store has been neatly fitted up, and Miss Olivia sits all day long in her pleasant parlor, feeling sure that the faithful clerk behind the counter will discharge his duties well. Greystone Hall is beautiful as ever, with its handsome rooms, its extensive grounds, its winding walks, its bubbling fountains and its wealth of flowers, but there is a shadow over all—a plague-spot which has eaten into the heart of Graham Thornton, and woven many a thread of silver among his raven locks. It has bent the stately form of his lady mother, and his once gay-hearted wife wanders with a

strange unrest from room to room, watching ever the uncertain footsteps of their only child, whose large, dark eyes, so much like those which, four long years ago flashed down on Helen their scrutinizing gaze, are darkened forever, *for little Maggie Lee is blind!*

They are getting somewhat accustomed to it now—accustomed to calling her their “poor, blind bird,” but the blow was crushing when first it came, and on the grave in the valley, Graham Thornton more than once laid his forehead in the dust, and cried, “My punishment is greater than I can bear.”

But He “who doeth all things well,” has in a measure healed the wound, throwing so much of sunshine and of joy around her, who never saw the glorious light of day, that with every morning’s dawn and every evening’s shade, the fond parents bless their little blind girl, the angel of their home.

THE ANSWERED PRAYER.

ALL day long the canary bird had sung unheeded in his gilded cage by the door, and the robin had caroled unheard by his nest in the tall maple tree, while the soft summer air and the golden rays of the warm June sun entered unnoticed the open windows of the richly furnished room, where a pale young mother kept her tireless watch by the bedside of her only child, a beautiful boy, three summers old. For many days he had hovered between life and death, while she, his mother, had hung over him with speechless agony, terrible to behold in one so young, so fair as she. He was her all, the only happiness she knew, for poor Lina Hastings was an unloving wife, who never yet had felt a thrill of joy at the sound of her husband’s voice, and when occasionally his broad hand rested fondly upon her flowing curls, while he whispered in her ear how dear she was to him, his words awoke no answering chord of love.

How came she then his wife—and the mistress of his princely home? Alas! *wealth* was then the god which Lina Moore worshipped, and when Ralph Hastings, with his uncouth form and hundreds of thousands asked her to be his wife, she stifled the better feelings of her nature which prompted her to tell him No, and with a gleam of pride in her dark blue eyes, and a deeper glow upon

her cheek, she one day passed from the bright sunshine of heaven into the sombre gloom of the gray old church, whence she came forth Lina Hastings, shuddering even as she heard that name, and shrinking involuntarily from the caresses which the newly made husband bestowed upon her. And so the love she withheld from him was given to the child who now lay motionless and white as the costly linen on which his golden curls were streaming.

All day she had watched him, for they told her that if he lived until the sun setting, there was hope, and as the hours wore on and the long shadows, stretching to the eastward, betokened the approach of night, oh, how intense became the anxiety in her bosom. Fainter and softer grew the sunlight on the floor, and whiter grew the face of the sleeping boy. 'Twas the shadow of death, they said, and with a bitter wail of woe, Lina fell upon her knees, and as if she would compel the God of Heaven to hear her, she shrieked, "Spare my child. Let him live, and I will bear whatsoever else of evil thou shalt send upon me. Afflict me in any other way and I can bear it, but spare to me my child."

In mercy or in wrath, Lina Hastings' prayer was answered. The pulse grew stronger beneath her touch—the breath came faster through the parted lips—a faint moisture was perceptible beneath the yellow curls, and when the sun was set the soft eyes of Eddie Hastings unclosed, and turned with a look of recognition upon his mother, who, clasping him in her arms, wept for joy, but returned no word or thought of gratitude toward Him who had been thus merciful to her.

* * * * *

In a small brown cottage in a distant part of the same

village, another mother was watching beside her first-born, only son. They had been friends in their girlhood, she and Lina Hastings. Together they had coned the same hard tasks—together they had built their playhouse beneath the same old chestnut tree—together, hand in hand, had they wandered over the rocky hills and through the shady woods of New England, and at the same altar had they plighted their marriage vows, the one to the man she loved, the other to the man she tolerated for the sake of his surroundings. From this point their paths diverged, Lina moving in the sphere to which her husband's wealth had raised her, while Mabel Parkman one sad morning awoke from her sweet dream of bliss to find herself wedded to a drunkard! Only they who like her have experienced a similar awakening, can know the bitterness of that hour, and yet methinks she was happier than the haughty Lina, for her love was no idle passion, and through weal and woe she clung to her husband, living oft on the remembrance of what he had been, and the hope of what he might be again, and when her little Willie was first laid upon her bosom, and she felt her husband's tears upon her cheek as he promised to reform for her sake and for his son's, she would not have exchanged her lot with that of the proudest in the land. That vow, alas, was ere long broken, and then, though she wept bitterly over his fall, she felt that she was not desolate, for there was music in her Willie's voice and sunshine in his presence.

But now he was dying, he was leaving her for ever, and as she thought of the long, dark days when she should look for him in vain, she staggered beneath the heavy blow, and in tones as heart-broken as those which had

fallen from Lina Hastings's lips, she prayed, "If it be possible let this cup pass from me," adding, "Not my will, oh God, but thine be done."

"I will do all things well," seemed whispered in her ear, and thus comforted she nerved herself to meet the worst. All the day she watched by her child, chafing his little hands, smoothing his scanty pillow beneath his head, bathing his burning forehead, and forcing down her bitter tears when in his disturbed sleep he would beg of his father to "bring him an orange—a nice yellow orange—he was so dry."

Alas, that father was where the song of the inebriate rose high on the summer air, and he heard not the pleadings of his son. 'Twas a dreary, desolate room where Willie Parkman lay, and when the sun went down and the night shadows fell, it seemed darker, drearier still. On the rude table by the window a candle dimly burned, but as the hours sped on it flickered awhile in its socket, then for an instant flashed up, illuminating the strangely beautiful face of the sleeping boy, and went out.

An hour later, and Willie awoke. Feeling for his mother's hand, he said, "Tell me true, do drunkards go to heaven?"

"There is for them no promise," was the wretched mother's answer.

"Then I shall never see pa again. Tell him good-by, good-by forever."

The next time he spoke it was to ask his mother to come near to him, that he might see her face once more. She did so, bending low and stifling her own great agony, lest it should add one pang to his dying hour.

"I cannot see you," he whispered, "it is so dark—so dark."

Oh, what would not that mother have given then for one of the lights which gleamed from the windows of the stately mansion where Eddie Hastings was watched by careful attendants. But it could not be, and when at last the silvery moon-beams came struggling through the open window and fell upon the white brow of the little boy, they did not rouse him, for a far more glorious light had dawned upon his immortal vision—even the light of the Everlasting.

* * * * *

In her tasteful boudoir sat Lina Hastings, and at her side, on a silken lounge, lay Eddie, calmly sleeping. The crisis was past—she knew he would live, and her cup of happiness was full. Suddenly the morning stillness was broken by the sound of a tolling bell. 'Twas the same which, but for God's mercy, would at that moment, perhaps, have tolled for her boy, and Lina involuntarily shuddered as she listened to the strokes, which, at first, were far between. Then they came faster, and as Lina counted *five*, she said aloud, "'Twas a child but two years older than Eddie."

Later in the day it came to her that the bereaved one was her early friend, whom now she seldom met. Once Lina would have flown to Mabel's side, and poured into her ear words of comfort, but her heart had grown hard and selfish, and so she only said, "Poor Mabel, she never was as fortunate as I"—and her eye glanced proudly around the elegantly-furnished room, falling at last upon Eddie, whom she clasped to her bosom passionately, but without thought of Him who had decreed that not then should *she* be written childless.

* * * * *

The humble funeral was over. The soft, green turf had been broken, and the bright June flowers had fallen beneath the old sexton's spade as he dug the little grave where Willie Parkman was laid to rest. In the drunkard's home there was again darkness and a silence which would never be broken by the prattle of a childish voice. Sobered, repentant, and heartbroken, the wretched father laid his head in the lap of his faithful wife, beseeching of her to pray that the vow that morning breathed by Willie's coffin and renewed by Willie's grave might be kept unbroken. And she did pray, poor Mabel. With her arms around the neck of the weeping man, she asked that this, her great bereavement, might be sanctified to the salvation of her erring husband.

"I will do all things well," again seemed whispered in her ear, and Mabel felt assured that Willie had not died in vain. 'Twas hard at first for Robert Parkman to break the chains which bound him, but the remembrance of Willie's touching message—"Tel' pa good-by, good-by forever," would rush to his mind whenever he essayed to take the poisonous bowl, and thus was he saved, and when the first day of a new year was ushered in, he stood with Mabel at the altar, and on his upturned brow received the baptismal waters, while the man of God broke to him the bread of life. Much that night they missed their child, and Mabel's tears fell like rain upon the soft, chestnut curl she had severed from his head, but as she looked upon her husband, now strong again in his restored manhood, she murmured—"It was for this that Willie died, and I would not that it should be otherwise."

* * * * *

Fifteen years have passed away since the day when Lina Hastings breathed that almost impious prayer—"Send upon me any evil but this," and upon the deep, blue waters of the Pacific a noble vessel lay becalmed. Fiercely the rays of a tropical sun poured down upon her hardy crew, but they heeded it not. With anxious, frightened faces and subdued step, they trod the deck, speaking in whispers of some dreaded event. There had been mutiny on board that man-of-war—a deep-laid plot to murder the commanding officers, and now, at the sun-setting, the instigators, four in number, were to pay the penalty of their crime. Three of them were old and hardened in sin, but the fourth, the fiercest spirit of all, 'twas said, was young and beautiful to look upon. In the brown curls of his waving hair there were no threads of silver, and on his brow there were no lines save those of reckless dissipation, while his beardless cheek was round and smooth as that of a girl. Accustomed from his earliest childhood to rule, he could not brook restraint, and when it was put upon him, he had rebelled against it, stirring up strife, and leading on his comrades, who, used as they were to vice, marveled that one so young should be so deeply depraved.

The sun was set. Darkness was upon the mighty deep, and the waves moved by the breeze which had sprung up, seemed to chant a mournful dirge for the boy who, far below, lay sleeping in a dishonored grave, if grave it can be called, where

"The purple mullet and gold fish rove,
Where the sea flower spreads its leaves of blue
Which never are wet with the falling dew,
But in bright and changeful beauty shine
Far down in the depths of the glassy brine."

Over the surging billow and away to the northward, other robins are singing in the old maple-tree than those which sang there years ago, when death seemed brooding o'er the place. Again the summer shadows fall aslant the bright green lawn, and the soft breezes laden with the perfume of a thousand flowers, kiss the faded brow of Lina Hastings, but they bring no gladness to her aching heart, for her thoughts are afar on the deep with the wayward boy who, spurning alike her words of love and censure, has gone from her "to return no more forever," he said, for he left her in bitter anger. For three years the tall grass has grown over the grave of her husband, who to the last was unloved, and now she is alone in her splendid home, watching at the dawn of day and watching at the hour of eve for the return of her son.

Alas, alas, fond mother, Mabel Parkman in her hour of trial, never felt a throb of such bitter agony as that which wrung your heart-strings when first you heard the dreadful story of your disgrace. There were days and weeks of wild frenzy, during which she would shriek "Would to Heaven he had died that night when he was young and innocent," and then she grew calm, sinking into a state of imbecility from which naught had power to rouse her.

A year or two more, and they made for her a grave by the side of her husband, and the hearts which in life were so divided, now rest quietly together, while on the costly marble above them there is inscribed the name of their son, who sleeps alone and unwept in the far-off Southern Seas.

THE END.

1864.



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